

OF  
THOUGHTFULNES  
FOR THE  
MORROW.  
WITH AN  
APPENDIX  
CONCERNING

The immoderate Desire of  
foreknowing things to come.

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of the Gospel.

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Vive hodiè.

Heb. 13. 8. *Jesus Christ the same yesterday  
and to day, and for ever.*

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TO THE  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
**A N N E,**  
LADY WHARTON.

**I***T was, Madam, the Character  
an ancient Worthy in the  
Christian Church gave of a noble  
person of your Sex, that, in refe-  
rence to the matters of Religion she  
was not only a Learner, but a  
Judge. And, accordingly, he in-  
scribes to her divers of his writings  
(even such as did require a very*

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*accurate judgment in the reading of them; ) Which remain, unto this day, disperſedly, in ſeveral parts of his works, dignify'd with her (often prefixed) name.*

*A greater, indeed, than he, mentions it as an ill character, to be not a doer of the Law, but a Judge. It makes a great difference in the exerciſe of the ſame faculty, and in doing the ſame thing, with what mind and deſign it is done.*

*There is a judging, that we may learn, and a judging, that we may not. A judgment ſubſervient to our duty, and a judgment oppoſite to it. Without a degree of the former no one can ever be a ſerious Chriſtian. By means of the latter,*  
*many*

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*many never are. The World through wisdom knew not God.*

*A cavilling litigious wit, in the confidence wherof any set themselves above their Rule, and make it their busines only to censure it, as if they would rather find faults in it, than themselves, is as inconsistent with sincere piety, as an humbly judicious discerning mind is necessary to it.*

*This proceeds from a due savour and relish of divine things, peculiar to them, in whom an heavenly spirit and principle have the possession, and a governing power. They that are after the Spirit, do savour the things of the Spirit. The other from the prepossession*

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*and prejudice of a disaffected carnal mind. They that are after the flesh, do only favour the things of the flesh.*

*The ability God hath endow'd your Ladiship with to judge of the Truth that is after godliness, is that you are better pleas'd to use, than hear of. I shall therefore be silent herein, and rather displease many of them that know you, who will be apt to think a copious subject is neglected; than say any thing that may offend either against your Ladiships inclination or my own.*

*Here is nothing abstruse and difficult for you to exercise a profound judgment upon; nor any thing curious to gratifie a pleasant wit. But*  
*plain*

# DEDICATORY.

*plain things, suitable to you, upon accounts common to the generality of Christians, not that are peculiar to your self. 'Tis easie to a well-temper'd mind, (of how high intellectual excellencies soever) to descend to the same level with the rest; when for them to reach up to the others pitch, is not so much as possible.*

Our heavenly Father keeps not (as to the substantials of our nutriment) distinct tables for his Children, but all must eat the same spiritual meät, and drink the same spiritual drink. He bath not one Gospel for great wits, and another for plainer people; But as all that are born of him must meet at

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*length in one end, so they must all walk by the same rule, and in the same way, thither.*

*And when I had first mentioned this Text of Scripture in your bearing, the favour you exprest to me of the subject, easily induc'd me, when, afterwards, I reckon'd a discourse upon it might be of common use, to address that also (such as it is) in this way, to your Ladyship. Accounting the mention of your name might draw the eyes of some to it, that have no reason to regard the Authors, and that, by this means, if it be capable of proving beneficial to any, the benefit might be diffus'd so much the further.*

*The aptnes of the materials and*  
sub-

## DEDICATORY.

subject, here discours't of, to do good generally, I cannot doubt. Neither our present duty or peace; nor our future safety or felicity can be provided for as they ought, till our minds be more abstracted from time, and taken up about the unseen, eternal World.

While our thoughts are too earnestly engaged about the events of future time, they are vain, bitter, impure, and diverted from our nobler, and most necessary pursuits. They follow much the temper and bent of our Spirits, which are often too intent upon what is uncertain, and perhaps, impossible.

All good and holy Persons cannot live in good Times. For who should

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*should bear up the Name of God in bad, and transmit it to succeeding times? Especially when good Men are not of the same mind, it is impossible. And, more especially, when they have not learn't, as yet, to bear one anothers differences. The same time, and state of things which please some, must displease others.*

*For some, that will think themselves much injur'd if they be not thought very pious Persons, will be pleased with nothing less, than the destruction of them that differ from them. So that while this is designed and attempted only; generally, neither sort is pleased, The One because it is not done, The Other because it is in doing.*

*It*



## DEDICATORY.

*It must be a marvellous alteration of Mens minds that must make the Times please us all; while, upon supposition of their remaining unalter'd, There is nothing will please one sort, but to see the other Pagans, or Beggars, who in the mean time are not enough mortify'd either to their Religion, or the necessary accommodations of humane life, as to be well pleas'd with either.*

*To trust God chearfully with the Government of this World, and to live in the joyful hope and expectation of a better, are the only means to relieve and ease us; and give us a vacancy for the proper work and busines of our present Time.*

*This is the design of the following*

## THE EPISTLE

*ing discourses.* The former *whereof* is directed against the careful thoughts, *which* are apt to arise in our minds concerning the Events of future Time, upon a fear what they may be. The other, *which* by way of Appendix is added to the former, tends to repress the immoderate desire of knowing what they shall be.

Which latter I thought, in respect of it's affinity to the other, fit to be added to it ; and in respect of the commonness, and ill tendency of this Distemper, very necessary. And indeed both the extreams in this matter are very unchristian, and pernicious. A stupid neglect of the Christian Interest, and of  
Gods

# DEDICATORY.

Gods Providence *about it* on the one hand ; *And* an Enthusiastick Phrensie, carrying Men to expect they well know not what? Or why? on the other.

Our great care should be to serve that Interest faithfully in our own stations, for our little time, that will soon be over. Your Ladiship hath been called to serve it in a Family wherein it hath long flourished. And which it hath dignify'd, beyond all the splendour that Antiquity and Secular greatnes could confer upon it. The Lord grant it may long continue to flourish there, under the joint-influence of your noble Consort, and your own; And, afterwards, in a Posterity, that may imitate  
their

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*their Ancestors in substantial Piety, and solid goodness.*

*Which is a glory that will not fade, nor vary ; not change with times, but equally recommend it self, to sober and good Men in all times. Whereas that which arises from the esteem of a Party can neither be diffusive, nor lasting.*

*'Tis true that I cannot but reckon it a part of any ones praise in a time wherein there are different Sentiments and waies, in circumstantial matters relating to Religion, to encline most to that which I take to come nearest the Truth and our common Rule. But, as was said by one that was a great and early light in the Christian Church ;*

# DEDICATORY.

*Church; "That is not Philosophy,  
"which is profest by this or that  
"Sect, but that which is true in  
"all Sects." So nor do I take that  
to be Religion, which is peculiar  
to this or that Party of Christi-  
ans (many of whom are too apt to  
say here is Christ, and there is  
Christ, as if he were divided )  
but that which is according to  
the mind of God among them  
all.*

*And I must profes to have that  
honour for your Ladiship, which  
I sincerely bear, and most justly owe  
unto you, chiefly upon the account  
not of the things wherein you  
differ from many other serious  
Christians ( though therein you  
agree*

THE EPISTLE, &c.

agree also with my self ) as for  
those things wherein you agree  
with them all. Under which no-  
tion (and under the sensible Obli-  
gation of your many singular Fa-  
vours ) I am

M A D A M,

Your Ladiships

very humble and

devoted Servant

in the Gospel,

J O H N H O W E.



OF  
THOUGHTFULNES  
FOR  
THE FUTURE.

---

MATTH. 6. 34.

*Take therefore no Thought for  
the Morrow: for the morrow  
shall take Thought for the  
things of it self: sufficient for  
the day is the evil thereof.*



THE Negative Precept (or  
the Prohibition) in  
the first words of this  
Verse, I shall take for  
the principal ground  
of the intended Discourse. But  
shall make use of the following  
B words,

words, for the same purpose for which they are here subjoyn'd by our Lord, viz, the Enforcement of it.

For our better understanding the Import of the Precept, Two things in it require Explication.

{ How we are to understand [The Morrow.]

{ What is meant by the [Thoughtfulness] we are to abstain from in reference thereto.

1. By *the Morrow* must be meant

1. *Some measure of time or other.*

2. *Such Occurrences, as it may be supposed shall fall within the Compass of that time.*

We



We are therefore to consider,

1. What *portion or measure of time* may be here signified by *to morrow*, for some *time* it must signify, in the *first place*, as fundamental to the further meaning. Not *abstractly*, or for *it self*, but as it is the Continent of such or such things as may fall within that time. And so that measure of time may, 1. Admit, no doubt, to be taken *strictly* for the very *next day*, according to the literal import of the word *to morrow*. But 2. It is also to be taken in a much larger sence, for the whole of our remaining time, *all our futurity* in this world. Indeed, the whole time of our Life on Earth is spoken of in the Scriptures, *but as a day*. Let him alone that he may accomplish as an hireling his day. Job

14. 6. We are a sort of *imagines*, short-liv'd Creatures, *we live but a day*, take the whole of our time together. Much less strange is it that the *little residue*, the *future time* that is before us, which we do not know how little it may be, should be spoken of but as a day. Experience hath taught even sensual Epicures so to account their remaining time: *Let us eat and drink, for to morrow we shall dye. i. e. Very shortly.* They were right in their Computation, but very wrong in their Inference. It should have been, *Let us watch and pray to day, we are to dye to morrow, let us labour for Eternity because time is so short.* But say they, *Let us eat and drink to day, for to morrow we shall dye.* A day to eat and drink was, it seems, a great gain. And if the phrase were not so used,  
to

to signifie all the residue of our future time, yet by consequence it must be so understood. For if we take to morrow in the strictest sence *for the very next day*; they that are not permitted, *with sollicitude*, to look forward so far as the very next day; much less may they to a remoter and more distant time. Yea and we may in some sence extend it not only to *all our future time*, but simply to *all future time* as that measures the concerns and affairs, not of this world only, but, which is more considerable, even of that lesser select community, *the Kingdom of God* in it, mentioned in the foregoing Verse. Which Kingdom, besides its future eternal State, lies also spread and stretcht throughout all time unto the end of the World. And *as to its present and temporal*  
B 3 State,

## Of Thoughtfulness

State, or as it falls under the measure of time, it is not un-supposable that it may be within the compass of our Saviours design, to forbid unto his disciples ( who were not only to pursue the blessedness of that Kingdom in the other world, but to intend the service of it in this ) an intemperate and vexatious solicitude about the success of their endeavours, for the promoting its present Interest. *i. e.* After he had more directly forbidden their undue carefulness about their own little concerns, what they should eat, drink or put on ; And directed them rather and more principally to seek the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, with an assurance that those other things should be added to them. It seems not improbable he might in conclusion, give this general direction, as with a more especial

re-

reference to the private concerns of humane life, about which common frailty might make them more apt to be unduly thoughtful: So with *Some* oblique and secondary reference to the affairs of that Kingdom too, which they were *here* to serve as well as *hereafter* to partake and enjoy. And about the success of which service (being once engaged in it, and the difficulties they were to encounter, appearing great and discouraging to so inconsiderable persons as they must reckon themselves) they might be somewhat *over solicitous* also.

Nor though they might not as yet understand their own work, nor (consequently) have the prospect of its difficulties as yet in view, are we to think our Saviour intended to limit the usefulness of

the instructions he now gave them, to the present time, but meant them to be of future use to them as occasions should afterwards occur. As we also find that they did recollect some other sayings of his, and understand better the meaning of them, when particular occasions brought them to mind, and discovered how apposite and applicable they then were. *Luke 24. 8. John 2. 22.*

So that we may fitly understand this prohibition to intend, universally, a repressing of that too great aptitude and proneness in the minds of men, unto undue excursions into futurity, their intemperate and extravagant rangings and roamings into that unknown Country, that *Terra incognita*, in which we can but bewilder and lose our selves to no purpose. There

Therefore Secondly and more principally, by [ to morrow ] we are to understand *the things* that may fall within that compass of *future time*. For *time* can only be the object of our care, *in that relative sense*, as it refers unto such and such occurrences and emergencies that may fall into it. And so our Saviour explains himself in the very next words, that by *to morrow* he means *the things of to morrow*. To morrow shall take care for *the things of it self*.

And yet here we must carefully distinguish, as to those *things* of to morrow, matters of *Event* and of *Duty*. We are not to think these the equally prohibited objects of our thoughts and care. *Duty* belongs to us, it falls within our Province,

vince, and there are (no doubt) thoughts to be employed, how I may continue on in a course of duty, unto which I am, by all the most sacred Obligations tyed for a stated course, that may lie before me, let it be never so long, and be there never so many to morrows in it. There ought to be thoughts used, of this sort, concerning the duties of the morrow, and of all my future time. If it please God to give me such additional time I will love him to morrow, I will serve him to morrow, I will trust him to morrow, I will walk with him to morrow. I will, through the Grace of God, live in his fear, service and communion, even as long as I have a day to live. Upon such terms doth every sincere Christian bind himself to God, even *for alwaies*, as God binds him-



himself to them on the same terms. *This God shall be our God for ever and ever, he shall be our guide even unto death.* Psalm 48. 14. The case can never alter with us in this regard, but as the worthiest object of all our thoughts is yesterday, and to day the same, and for ever, so should the course of our thoughts be too, in reference to that blessed object. *Every day will I bless thee, and praise thy name for ever and ever.* Psal. 145. 2. *I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live; I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.* Psal. 104. 33. The thoughts of our hearts should be much exercised this way, how it may be thus with us, in all future time; that to morrow, in this respect may be as this day, and much more abundant, as is spoken on a much another account, *Isai. 56. 12.* To morrow shall be as this day, God assist.

assisting, and much more abundant as to my love to him, serving of him, conversing with him, doing and designing for him, which are to run through all my dayes.

But now for the Events of *to morrow*, they are things quite of another consideration. They do not belong to us, they are not of the *τὰ ἐφ' ἡμῶν*, none of the things within our compass. To employ our selves with excessive intention of thoughts and cares concerning them, is to meddle without our Sphære, beyond what we have any warrant for, farther than as it is in some cases supposable there may be some connexion, and dependance, between such and such Events, and my own either sin, or duty.

Now Events that may occur to

us

us to morrow, or in our future time, you know are distinguishable into good or bad, grateful and ungrateful, pleasing to us or displeasing. Good or grateful Events, you easily apprehend, are not here intended. We do not use to perplex our selves about good things, otherwise than *as they may be wanting*, and as we may be deprived of them, which privation or want is an Evil. And under that notion our Saviour considers the object of the prohibited thoughtfulness, as his after words shew. Sufficient for the day is *the Evil of it*. And therefore gives caution not equally against all fore-thoughts, about the Events of future time; of which some may be both rational, and pleasant. But against forebodings, and presages of evil and direful things. As lest such thoughts should

should slide into our minds, or impose and obtrude themselves upon us. "Alas! what shall I do to live to morrow? I am afraid I shall want bread for to morrow, or for my future time". This our Saviour sayes is *paganish*, after these things do the Gentiles seek, that (as is intimated) have no father to take care of them: Your heavenly father knows you have need of these things, vers. 32. And directs his disciples to a noble object of their thoughts and care, vers. 33. Seek you first the Kingdom of God: wherein, as their future reward, so their present work and business was to lie. And then addes, *Take no thought for to morrow*, q. d. It would be indeed an ill thing if you should want bread to morrow, and it would be worse if the affairs of Gods Kingdom should miscarry, or you  
be

be excluded it. But mind you your own present work, and be not unduly concerned about these surmised bad events, God will provide. This is then, in short, the *object* of this prohibited thoughtfulness [*future time including whatsoever ingrateful events, we suppose, and preapprehend in it.*]

Secondly, We are to enquire about the *thoughtfulness* prohibited in reference hereto. It cannot be that *all use of thoughts about future events*, even such, as, when they occur, may prove afflictive, is intended to be forbidden. Which indeed may be collected from the import of the word in the Text that signifies *another, peculiar sort of thinking*, as we shall hereafter have more occasion to take notice. We were made and are naturally, *think-*

*thinking* Creatures; yea and *forethink*ing, or capable of *prospiciency* and *foresight*. 'Tis that by which in part Man is distinguished from Beast.

*Maimonid.  
Mor. Nev.  
D. Mer. Ca-  
saubon. En-  
thus.*

Without disputing as some do how far *nature*, in this, or that man, doth contribute to *divination* and *prophecy*; we may say of *Man* indefinitely, *he is a sort of divining creature*, and of *humane nature* in common, that it much excells the *brutal*, in this, that, whereas *sense* is limited to the *present*; *Reason* hath dignify'd our nature by adding to it a *sagacity*, and enabling us to use *prosppection* in reference to what yet lies more remotely before us. And though we are too apt to a faulty excess herein, and to be over-*presaging* (which it is the design of this discourse to shew) yet we are not to think that all use of any natural faculty can be a fault; for

for that would be to charge a fault on the Authour of nature. The faculties will be active. To plant them therefore in our natures, and forbid their use, were not consistent with the wisdom, righteousness, and goodness by which they are implanted. It must therefore be our business to shew

{ What Thoughtfulness }  
     { is not, } within  
     { And then, what is }  
 the compass of this Prohibition.

1. *What is not.* There is, in the general, a *prudent*, and there is a *Christian* use of forethought, about matters of that nature already specify'd; which we cannot understand it was our Saviours meaning to forbid.

1. A *prudent*, which imports reference to an end. Our actions are so far said to be governed by prudence, and to proceed from it as they do designedly and aptly serve a valuable end. The foresight of evils probable, yea even possible, to befall us, is useful, upon a prudential account, to several very considerable ends, and purposes; either to put us upon doing the more good in the mean time, or upon the endeavour (within moderate bounds, and as more may be needful) of possessing more; or that we may avert or avoid imminent evils; or that what cannot be avoided, we may be the better able to bear.

1. That we may be incited hereupon to do all the good we can



can in the world, in the mean time, before such evils overtake and prevent us. For prudence it self will teach a man to account (and hath taught even Heathens) that he doth not live in this world, meerly, that he may live; that he is not to live wholly to himself; his Friends claim a part in him, his Neighbours a part, his Countrey a part; The world a part. He lives not at the rate of a prudent man that thinks of living only to indulge and gratifie himself, and consult his own ease and pleasure, and, upon this consideration, his prudence should instruct him to do all the present good he can, because there are evils in view that may narrow his capacity, and snatch from him the opportunity of doing much. *The evil day* (as it is more eminently called) is not

far off. He should therefore be-  
think himself of *doing good to his  
friend* (as the son of Syrach speaks)  
*before he dye.* And there are other  
evils that may anticipate that day:  
Unto which the Preacher hath re-  
ference, *Eccles. 11. 2.* when he di-  
rects, *to give a portion to seven and  
also to eight, because we know not what  
evil shall be upon the earth.* We can-  
not tell how soon we may have nei-  
ther power nor time left to do it in.

Yea and secondly that we may  
be provided (as far as it lies within  
the compass of regular endeavour) of  
such needful good things, as are re-  
quisite for our support in this our  
pilgrimage; and especially, upon  
occasion of a foreseen calamity  
approaching. This, as prudence  
doth require, so we cannot sup-  
pose our Saviour doth by a con-  
stant

stant rule forbid, who sometime enjoined his disciples to carry a scrip with them, though at another time (that they might, once for all, be convinced of the sufficient care, of providence, when or howsoever they should be precluded from using their own) he did, extraordinarily, forbid it. And 'tis evident that, in common cases, it is more especially incumbent on the Master of a family to make provision for his household, for the future; to provide in the more convenient season of the year, as in Summer, for the following winter. A document which the Slothful are sent to learn from a very despicable Instructor. *Go to the Ant thou Sluggard. Prov. 6. 6. &c.* And again

Thirdly, That the approaching  
C 3 Evil

Evil may, if avoidable, be declin'd, *The prudent man foresees the evil and hides himself, when the simple pass on and are punished, Prov. 22.3.* And, perhaps, for this their simplicity; that they regardlessly go on with a stupid negligence of all warnings, till the stroke and storm fall. Which, whereas there may be one event to the wise man and the fool, (as *Eccl. 2. 14.*) will prove to the one a meer affliction, to the other (upon this as well as other accounts) a proper and most deserved punishment. Because (as is there said) *the wise mans eyes are in his head*, prompt and ready for their present use, *the fool walks in darkness*, which must be understood of a voluntary self created darkness, as if he had pluckt out his own eyes. Which is the *wickedness of folly*, as the same *Ecclesiastes's* phrase is, *chap. 7. vers. 25.* Fourthly,

Fourthly, That what cannot be avoided may be the more easily born. Every man counts it desirable, not to be surprized by Evils that are unavoidable and no way to be averted. Prudence will, in such a case, use forethoughts to better purpose, than only to anticipate and multiply an affliction, or consequently, to increase its weight; but much to alleviate and lessen it. By *learning* to bear it; gradually, and by gentle essays to acquaint the shoulder with the burden. To enure and compose the mind, and reconcile it to the several circumstances (so far as they are foreseen) of that less-pleasing state we are next to pass into. Which advantage might be one reason why Solomon in the abovementioned place (though ac-

cording to the Genius of that *reasoning* book he variously discourses things on the one hand and the other) prefers wisdom to folly as much as light to darkness; *Eccles. 2. 13.* though one event may happen to both. 'Tis an uncomfortable thing to walk in darkness; and (supposing there be that Wisdom that can make due use of a prospect) not to see an evil till we meet, and feel it. Unexpected Evils carry, *as such*, a more peculiar sting and pungency with them. When any shall say peace, peace, till sudden destruction comes upon them as travail on a woman with Child, *1 Thes. 5. 3.*

Nor can we reasonably think it was any part of our Saviours intendment, to advise his disciples unto such a *self-revenging* security who

who so often enjoyns them watchfulness, because of what should come to pass. Or that he should counsel them to the same thing, for which he blames and upbraids the *Pbarisees* and *Sadduces*, *their not discerning the signs of the times*. Upon all these prudential accounts there is a use of forethoughts about future approaching Evils,

Secondly, And there is a further use to be made of them upon an account more purely Christian. I would tempt none, under pretence of *distinguishing* these heads, to think they should *oppose* them. Christianity must be understood in reference to common prudence to be *cumulative* not *privative*. It addes to it therefore. Opposes it not, but supposes it rather. And indeed it addes *that*, upon the account

count whereof we are far the more liable to afflicting evils, and so are the more concerned to use forethoughts about them. For, whereas there are much rarer instances of Suffering meerly for the duties of *Natural Religion*, which the common reason of man acknowledges equal, and unexceptionable, We are plainly told that *all that will live godly [in Christ Jesus] shall suffer persecution*, 2 Tim. 3. 12. (though not in all times alike.) Here therefore 'tis necessary we have serious forethoughts, of the Evils which seem likely to befall us, for the *Christian Interest*, upon several accounts.

1. *That we may espouse it sincerely.* And enter our selves the disciples of Christ *with a true heart.* Which we are not likely to do if  
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we understand not his terms, and do not consider the state of the case. What is done *without Judgment*, or upon mistake, is not like to be *done in truth*. If we fall in with *Christ* and *Christianity* upon supposition of only *Halcyon dayes*, in our time, and that we shall never be called to suffer for him; we shall most probably, deceive our selves; and prove false to him. It will appear our bargain was void in the making, as to any *tye* we can have upon him. We are to reckon, when we take on the yoke of *Christ*, of bearing, also, his *Cross*; and be in a preparation of mind to lose and suffer all things for him. And to use forethoughts of this kind is what he enjoins us, *Luke 14. 28.* under the Expression of *counting the cost*, what it may amount unto to be a resolved sincere *Christian*.

stian. And he tells us withall, what the cost is to *forsake all*. Vers. 33. to abandon *Father, Mother, Wife, Children, Brethren, Sisters, and ones own life*, Vers. 26. And all this (as is often inculcated) as that without which a man cannot [be] his disciple. i. e. Not become One, as there the Phrase must signifie! So that though he have come to him, i. e. have begun to treat (If a man come to me) and do not so (in his previous resolution) nothing is concluded between Christ and him.

Secondly, That, upon this constant prospect of the state of our case, we may endeavour our own confirmation, from time to time in our fidelity to him. For new, and unforethought occasions, that we have not comprehended in their particulars,

culars, or in equivalence, may be-  
get new impressions, and disposi-  
tions to revolt. Besides all that had  
come upon those faithful Confes-  
sors, Psalm 44. that *they were sore  
broken in the place of dragons, and co-  
vered with the shadow of death,* vers.  
19. notwithstanding which they  
appeal to God, that *their heart was  
not turned back, and that their steps  
had not declin'd from his way;* and  
offer themselves to his search,  
whether they had forgotten him, or  
*stretch't out their hands to a strange God.*  
They add, *yea for thy sake we  
are killed all the day long.* They  
reckon upon nothing but suffering,  
and that to utmost extremity, *all  
the rest of their day,* and yet are still of  
the same mind. Patience must be  
laid in, that may be drawn forth  
unto long-suffering. And we are to  
*endure to the end, that we may be sa-  
ved.*

ved. And therefore suffering to the last, is to be forethought of, through the whole course of which state of suffering we must resolve, through the grace of Christ, never to desert his Interest. Otherwise we are so deceived, as he that goes to build a Tower, without counting what his expence will be, before hand; or he that is to meet an Enemy in the Field, without making a computation of the Equality or Inequality of the Forces on the one side and the other; as our Saviour further discourses in the above-mentioned context:

Thirdly, That we may cast with our selves how, not only not to desert the Christian Interest, but most advantageously to serve it. Suppositions ought to be made of whatsoever difficulties seem not un-

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unlikely to be in our case, that  
we may bethink our selves how  
we may be of most use to the In-  
terest of our great Master and Lord,  
*upon such, and such emergencies.* For  
such a supposition he himself sug-  
gests, *Mat. 10. 23. If they persecute*  
*you in this City, flee ye into another.*  
And 'tis likely he gives this directi-  
on not with respect meerly to their  
*being safe,* but *serviceable,* as the fol-  
lowing words seem to intimate,  
*For verily I say unto you, ye shall not*  
*have gone over the cities of Israel till*  
*the Son of man be come. q.d.* You  
will have work to do whither ever  
you come, and will scarce have done  
all within that allotment of time  
you will have for it, before the  
Vengeance determined upon this  
people prevent you of further op-  
portunity among them. As *Ter-*  
*tullian* discourses at large, and not  
irra-

\*Expos. in irratically, upon this subject and  
 Evang. Jo-  
 ban. c. 10. *Augustine* to the like purpose \*.

*If they per-  
 secute you in  
 one City, fly, &c.* Yet Lord, thou saist, the Hireling fleeth, who is this  
 Hireling? He that flies seeking his own things, not the things of  
 Jesus Christ. Thou hast fled (though present) because thou wast  
 silent, wast silent, because thou wast afraid, fear is the flight of  
 the mind, &c.

Fourthly, That we may be the  
 more excited to pray for the pre-  
 servation and prosperity of the Chri-  
 stian Interest. Those we should  
 alwaies reckon the worst dayes,  
 that are of worst abroad *unto it*,  
 though we expect our own share  
 in the calamities of such daies.  
 When his Interest declines, and  
 there are *Phænomena* in providence,  
 appearances and aspects very threat-  
 ning to it, there ought to be the  
 more earnest and importunate pray-  
 ing. And that there may be so,  
 our eye should look forward, and  
 be directed towards the foreshewn  
 Events

Events as from whence we are to take Arguments and motives to prayer. And we should reckon, Therefore they are presignified that we may be excited. And a dutiful love to his great name be awakened in us. *What shall be done to thy great name?* What shall become of thy Kingdom among men? Nor can we ever pray [Thy Kingdom come] without a prospect to futurity. Yea and all prayer hath reference to somewhat yet future. If therefore all forethoughts about the concernments of future time were simply forbidden, There were no place left for prayer at all. Hitherto then we see how far taking thought about the future is not forbidden.

Secondly, We are next therefore to shew wherein it is. And

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it

it appears from what hath been said, it is *not evil in it self*, for then it must be universally so, and no circumstance could make it good or allowable in any kind. Therefore it must be evil only either by participation or by redundancy. And so it may be, either as

{ *Proceeding from evil,*  
 { *Or as tending to evil.*

i. e. In respect either of the *evil causes* from which it comes, or of the *ill effects* to which it tends. Under these two heads we shall comprehend what is to be said for opening the sense wherein it may be understood to fall under the present prohibition.

1. *All such thoughtfulness* must be understood to be *evil* and forbidden,



as hath an *ill root and original*. As, before, our Saviour, in this Sermon of his, forbids somewhat else, under this notion, because *it cometh of evil*. What doth so, partakes from thence an ill savour. Those are evil thoughts that participate and as it were, tast of an evil Cause which may be manifold.

As first, It may proceed from a *groundless and too confident presumption* that we shall live to morrow, and that our [ to morrow ] shall be a long day, or that we have much time before us in the world; which as it really is a great uncertainty, ought alwaies to be so esteemed: Men presume first, and take somewhat for granted which they ought not, and make that their *Hypothesis*, upon which they lay a frame of iniquity of this kind, and make

it the ground of much forbidden thoughtfulness and care. They forget in whose hands their breath is, assume to themselves the measuring of their own time, as if they were Lords of it, take it for granted they shall live *so long*; and accordingly form their projects, lay designs, and then grow very solicitous how they will succeed and take effect. By breaking another former law, they lead themselves into the transgression of *this*, i. e. first *boast of to morrow* against the prohibition, Prov. 27. 1. and then proceed unduly to take thought for *to morrow*. The case which we find falls under animadversion, James 4. 19, &c. *To morrow we will go to such a City, and buy and sell, and get gain; when as (saith that Apostle) you do not know what shall be on the morrow; for what is your life, is it not*

a vapor? &c. Would we learn to dye daily, and consider that, for ought we know, to morrow in the strictest sense, may prove the day of our death, and that then, in that very day must our *thoughts* perish, We should think less intensely on the less fruitful Subjects. Our thoughts would take an higher flight, not flutter in the dust, and fill our souls with gravel, as is our wont; and less no doubt offend against the true meaning of this Interdict of our Saviour in the Text.

Secondly, *There may be an undue forbidden thoughtfulness about to morrow, proceeding from a too curious inquisitiveness, and affectation of prying into Futurity. Men have nothing here but gloom, and cloudy darkness before them. Fain they*

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would

would with their weak and feeble beam Pierce the cloud, and cannot; 'tis retorted and doth not enter. They think to reinforce it by a throng, and thick succession of thoughts, but do only think themselves into the more confusion. Cannot see what is next before them. What new Scene shall first open upon them, they cannot tell. And (as is natural to them that converse in dubious darkness) their thoughts turn all to *fear*. And they therefore *think the more*, and as their thoughts multiply, increase their fear. Whereas they should retire, and abstain from conversing in so disconsolate a region, among Shades and Spectres, which are their own creatures, perhaps, for the most part; and wherewith they first cheat, and then fright themselves. They should choose rather to converse

verse in the light, of former, and present things, which they know; and of such greater and more considerable futurities as God hath thought fit plainly to reveal. And be contented there should be *'Arcana*, and that such future things remain so, as God hath reserved and locked up from us. *It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power*, saith our Saviour (departing) unto his disciples, *Act. 1. 7.* when he was now going up into glory. Fain they would have known how it should speed afterwards with them, and his Interest. *Wilt thou now* (say they) *restore the Kingdom to Israel?* *It is not for you* (saies he) *to know, &c.* If God should any way give us light into futurity 'tis to be accepted, if we are sure it his from him; and

be regarded according to what proofs there are that it is so. As, sometimes, he doth premonish of very considerable Events, that are coming on; and, according to what of Evidence there is in any such monition, ought the impressions to be upon our Spirits. But when out of our own fancies we will supply the want of such a discovery, and curiously busie (much more if we hereupon torment) our selves to no purpose; This we cannot doubt is forbidden us. But we shall say more of it hereafter apart by it self. And with this we may most fitly connect,

Thirdly, *That such thoughtfulness about the future is to be concluded undue and forbidden, as proceeds from a too conceited self indulgent opinion of our own wisdom, and ability to foresee*

see what shall happen. For from our very earnest *desire to fore-know*, may easily arise a belief that we do, or can do so. As a dream cometh from multitude of busines, the over-busie agitation, and exercise of our minds about what shall be, makes us dream, and in our dream we seem to our selves to see Visions; and have before us very accurate Schemes and prospects of things. How inventive are men and ingenious in contriving their frames and models either direful and dismal, or pleasant and entertaining, as the disposition of their minds is, compared with the present aspect of affairs, which variously impresses them this way or that! If they be terrible and dismal, but raised only upon a conceited opinion of our own great skill and faculty in foreseeing, they have their  
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*afflicting* evil in themselves, our own creature (of it self ravenous) tears and torments us. If they be pleasant and delectable, yet they may become afflicting by *accident*. For some one unthought of thing, falling out contrary to our expectation, may overturn our whole model and fabrick, as a touch doth an house of Cards, and then we play the childs part in deploring, as we did in erecting it. Fret, and despair that things can ever be brought to so good a posture again. But whether they be the one or the other, their *sinful* evil (which we are now considering) they owe to one and the same *culpable cause*, that we are so *overwise*, and take upon us with such confidence to conclude of what shall be. As if our wisdom were the measure of things, or could give Laws to Providence from which



which it can never vary. It is not in it self a fault to be afraid of what is formidable, or pleased with what is pleasant (except it be with excess.) But it is our fault to be either frightened with Shadowes, or to surfeit our selves with a temporary short pleasure drawn out from them, that may, afterward, revenge it self upon us with the sharper torture. When as all their power to hurt us they receive from our selves. And have no more of reality or existence, than a strong imagination, and confidence of our own undeceivable wit, and sagacity gives them. Who in all the world have minds so vext with suddain passions of fear and hope, joy and sorrow, anger and despair, as your smattering Pedants in Policy, such as set up for *Dons*; and who fancy themselves men of great reach,

reach, able to foretell remote changes, and see things whose distance makes them invisible to all but themselves? That hold a continual Council-table in their own divining heads, think themselves to comprehend all reasons of State. Are as busie as *Princes* and *Emperours*, or their greatest *Ministers*; mightily taken up in all affairs, but those of their own private stations. And thereby qualify'd to be State Weather-glasses, but prove no better for the use they pretend for, than a common Almanack, where you may write wet for dry throughout the year, and as much hit the truth. They that shall consider the abstrusenes of designs and transactions that relate to the publick, and how much resolutions about them depend upon what it is fit should be commonly unknown;

So

So that they that judge without  
dores must think and talk at ran-  
dom: and withall that shall con-  
sider the uncertainty of humane af-  
fairs, and that they who manage  
them are liable to ignorances,  
mistakes, incogitancies, and to the  
hurry of various passions as well  
as other men; especially that shall  
consider the many surprizing in-  
terpositions of an over-ruling hand,  
and what innumerable varieties of  
paths lye open to the view, and  
choice of *an infinite mind*, which we  
can have no apprehension of; might  
easily, *before hand*, apprehend the  
vanity of attempting much in this  
kind, as common experience daily  
shews it, *afterwards*. So that mul-  
titudes of presaging thoughts, and  
agitations of mind, which proceed  
from the supposition of the con-  
trary, cannot be without much sin  
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against this Precept of our Lord. And which would mostly be avoided, would we once learn to lay no great stress of expectation upon any thing *that may be otherwise*; and to reckon (with that modesty which would well become us) that we can foresee nothing in the course of ordinary humane affairs upon more certain terms.

Fourthly, Here is especially forbidden *such thoughtfulness as proceeds from a secret distrust of Providence*, from a latent, lurking Atheism, or (which comes all to one as to the matter of Religion) an Only Epicurean Theism that excludes the divine Presence and Government, *i. e.* Call it by the one of these names, or the other; whatsoever thoughtfulness proceeds from our not having

a fixed, steady, actual belief of the Wise, Holy, Righteous, and powerful Providence that governs all Affairs in the world, and particularly all our own affairs, no doubt highly offends against this Law. When we have thought God out of the world, what an horrid darkness do we turn it into to our selves! What a dismal wast and Wildernes do we make it! We can have no prospect but of darknes and desolation alway before us. Did we apprehend God as every where *present* and *active*; (*Deum ire per omnes terrasque tractusque maris----*) that Heavens, Earth and Seas are replenisht with a divine powerful Presence; were our minds possessed with the belief of *his fulness filling all in all*, and of his governing Power and Wisdom, extending to all times as well

as places; there were neither time nor place left for undue thoughtfulness of what is, or shall be. But by a secret disbelief of Providence, or our not having a serious fixed lively practical belief of it, we put our selves into the condition of the *more stupid Pagans*, and are not only as strangers to the common-wealth of *Israel*, and the Covenants of promise, and without Christ, and Hope, but even as without God in the world, or *Atheists* in it, as the word there signifies; *Ephes. 2. 12.* And when we have thus by our own disbelief shut out God, how *over=officiously* do we offer our selves to succeed into his place! And now how immense a charge have we taken upon us! We will govern the world and order affairs, and times, and seasons. A province for which we

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are as fit as he whom the Poetick  
fable places in the Chariot of the  
Sun. And *so*, were it *in our power*,  
we should put *all things* into a  
combustion. But it is too much  
for us, that our *impotency* serves us to  
scorch *our selves*, and set our own  
Souls on fire. How do our own  
thoughts ferment, and glow with-  
in us, when we feel our inability to  
dispose of things, and counterwork  
cross events, or even shift for our  
selves? For what are we to fill  
up the room of God! or supply  
the place of an excluded Deity!  
No wonder if troublous *thoughts*  
multiply upon us, till we cannot  
sustain the cumbersome burden.  
The context shews this to be the  
design of our Lord, to possess the  
minds of his Disciples, when he  
prohibits them thoughtfulness, with  
a serious believing apprehension

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of

of Providence, such a Providence as reacheth to all things; even the most minute, and inconsiderable; to the Birds that fly in the Air, the Flowers that grow in mens Gardens, the Grass in their fields, and (elsewhere) the hairs on their own heads. And certainly if we could but carry with us apprehensive minds of such a Providence every where acting, and which nothing escapes; it must exclude the thoughtfulness here intendend to be forbidden.

Fifthly, *Such as proceeds from an ungovernable Spirit*, an heart not enough *subdued* to the ruling power of God over the world. Not only *distrustfulness* of Providence but *rebellion* against it, may be the (very-abundant) Spring of undue Thoughtfulness. A temper of Spirit



ric impatient of government, self-will'd, indomitable, that sayes, I must have my own will and way, and things must be after my mind, and manner, can never be unaccompanied with a solicitude that they may do so, as undutiful and sinful as its cause. A mind untractably set, and preingaged one way, cannot but be filled with tumult, and mutinous *thoughts* upon any appearing probability that things may fall out otherwise. In reference to an afflicted Suffering condition (how ungrateful soever it be to our *flesh*) a filial subjection to the father of our Spirits is required under highest penalty. Shall we not be subject to the Father of Spirits and live? Heb. 12. 9. To mutiny is mortal, q. d. You must be subject, your life lies on it. The title which the Sacred Penman there

fixes on God, *the Father of Spirits* is observable, and ought to be both instructive, and grateful to us. He is the great *Paternal Spirit*. We (in respect of our Spirits) are in *his Off-spring* (as the Apostle elsewhere from an Heathen Poet urges, *Act. 17.*) In this context *the fathers of our flesh*, and the *Father of Spirits* are studiously contradistinguished to one another. The relation God bears to us as *our Father* terminates on our Spirits. And his *paternal care and love* cannot but follow the relation, and principally terminate there too. He must be chiefly concerned about our Spirits, that they be preserved in a good and healthful State. If therefore it be requisite, for the advantage of *our Spirits*, that *our flesh* do suffer, we are not to think he will stand upon *that*, or oppose  
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the *gratification* of our *Flesh* to the *necessity* of our *Spirits*. And in this case shall not the *wisdom* and *authority* of the *Father* judge, and rule, and the *duty* of the *Son* oblige him to *submit* and *obey*? And whereas 'tis added [*and live?*] it implies we are not, upon other terms, to expect a *livelyhood*, to *subsist* and be maintained. A *Son* in a plentiful, well-governed family, as long as he can be content to keep to the orders, and rule of the family, and live under the care of a wise and kind father, he may live without care, or *taking thought*; but if he will go into rebellion he puts himself into a condition *thoughtful* enough. He is brought to the condition of the *prodigal* that knew not what shift to make to live, till he advises with himself, and comes to that wise resolution of

returning. I will arise and go to my Father----- If we speak of the life of our Spirits, in the moral sense (which in the natural sense we know are alwaies immortal) it consists, as our bodily life doth, in an *εὐνομία*, in that holy order, and temperament, which depends upon our continued union with God, and keeping in with him (as the bodily Crasis is preserved as long as the Soul holds it united with it self.) An holy rectitude, composure, and tranquillity is our life, carries with it a lively Sprightly vigor. *To be Spiritually minded is life and peace*, Rom. 8. 6. But if we refuse to submit to the order of God, and offer to break our selves off from him, this hath a deadly tendency. It tends to dissolve the whole frame, and would end in death if Sovereign victorious grace, did

did not prevent. To be sure *an attempt to rebel* gradually discomposes, our whole Soul, and brings in a croud of thoughts that will be as *uncomfortable to our selves*, as they are *undutiful towards God*; And consequently impair and infeeble life. Which our Saviour implies to consist in a good, healthy, comfortable internal habit of mind and Spirit, when he denies it to stand in externals. *A mans life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses*, Luk. 12. 15. All which inward composure and tranquillity depends upon our *willing submitting to be governed*. What a blessed repose and rest! how pleasant a vacancy of diseasing vexatious thoughts doth that Soul enjoy that resigned it self, and gives a constant unintermitted consent to the divine Government! When it is

an agreed undisputed thing, that God shall alwaies lead and prescribe, and it follow and obey.

Some Heathens have given us documents about *following God* that might both instruct and shame us at once. It would save us many a vain and troublesome range, and excursion of mind, and thoughts, could we once learn constantly to do so. If upon a Journey, in an intricate way full of various turnings, and windings, a man have a good and sure guide before him; as long as he follows he needs not be thoughtful or make trials here and there. But if he will outrun his guide, and take this or that by-way because it seems pleasant, he puts himself to the needles labour of coming so far back, unless he will erre continually. As long

long as we are content that God govern the world and us, all is well.

Sixthly, All such thoughtfulness is undue *as proceeds from a dislike of Gods former Methods in what he hath heretofore done.* When, because things have not gone so as to please us formerly, therefore we are thoughtful and afraid they may as little please us hereafter.

Here the peccant cause is an *aptnes to censure and correct Providence.* As they *Mal. 2. 17. Where is the God of Judgement?* (We may reckon it a branch from that former root, *an unsubject Spirit*, only shooting backward.) A disposition to find fault with the paths God hath taken, as if he had made some wrong steps, or in this or that

that instance, had mistaken his way. *But he that reproveth God, let him answer it, Job 40. 2.* Men are apt to fancy that things might have been better so or so. Hereupon how do thoughts flutter and fly out to *futurity*! "What if he should do to *morrow*, as he did *yesterday*; in *future*, as in former time, what a world should we have of it?"

There had been some rough unpleasant passages *even to Moles himself* in the course of Gods dispensation towards *Israel*, while they were under *his* conduct. But in the *review* of all, when he was now to leave them, how calm and pacate is his Spirit! When in that most Seraphick Valedictory Song of his, *Deut. 32.* his sentence upon the whole matter is, *His works are perfect, for all his waies are Judgment, vers. 4.*

Judg.



Judgment is (*with us* who must argue and debate things before we determine) the most exquisite reason, or rather the perfection, and final result of many foregoing reasonings. So that *Moses's* testimony concerning all Gods waies is that they were alwaies chosen with that exact judgment, as if he had long reasoned with himself concerning every step he took. That certainly he had a very good reason for whatever he did, all as perfectly seen by him at one view, as if (like us) he considered long, before he judg'd what was to be done.

Could we once learn to sing tunably the Song of *Moses* and the Lamb, *Great and Marvellous* are thy works, O Lord God Almighty, just  
and

and true are all thy wayes, O King of Saints: To like well all his former Methods, to admire the amiableness and Beauty of Providence in every thing, or generally to approve and applaud all things he hitherto hath done, to account he hath ever gone the best way that could have been gone, in all that hath past; we should never have dubious thoughts about what he will do hereafter.

And this is no more than what the *truth of the matter* challenges from us, to esteem he hath some valuable reason for every thing he hath done. For sometimes we can see the reason, and are to judge so explicitly upon what we see. And when we cannot, 'tis highly reasonable it should be with us the matter of an implicit belief that  
so

so it is. For though to pretend to pay that observance to *fallible man*, must argue either *insincerity*, or *folly*; The known perfection of the nature of God, makes it not only safe, but our duty to hold alwaies that peremptory fixed conclusion concerning all his dispensations. Indeed concerning some men of known reputed wisdom, it is not only *mannerly* but *prudent*, to account they *may* see good reason for some doubtful actions of theirs, when we cannot be sure they do. Much more may we confidently conclude that God *ever doth* and *must do so*. It is not a blind obsequiousnes, but a manifest duty, which the plain reason of the thing exacts from us. And he Justly takes himself affronted and counts it an impious insolence when things look not well to *our Judgments*, then to  
questi-

question his, as he complains in that mentioned place, *Mal. 2. 17.* *Ye have wearied me with your words, yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied thee? In that ye say, every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and he delighteth in them, and where is the God of Judgment?*

But how free is that happy Soul from Sinful anxious thoughts, with whom that conclusion neither is notionally denied, nor doth obtain meerly as a notion, but is a settled practical and vital principle, *He hath done all things well.*

Seventhly, Such as proceeds from an over addictednes to this world, and little relish of the things of the world to come. All that ariseth from a terrene mind, that Savours not heavenly things. The heart is the foun-

fountain of thoughts. From thence they arise, and receive their distinguishing tincture. They are as the temper of the heart is. If that be evil, thence are evil thoughts, *Mat. 15. 19.* If it be earthly, they run upon earthly things, and Saviour both of it, and the things they are taken up about. This was the case of the Disciples, *Mat. 16. 22, 23.* When our Saviour had immediately before, enquired the common opinion concerning him, and approved theirs, and confirmed them in it, that he was *Christ the Son of the living God*; They draw all to the favouring the too-carnal imagination and inclination of their own terrene hearts. They think he cannot want power, being the *Son of the living God*, to do great things in the world, and make them great men. And reckon his love and

and kindnes to them must engage the divine Power which they saw was with him for these purposes. And 'tis likely when he directs his Speech to *Peter*, and speaks of giving him *the Keyes*, which he might know had heretofore been the *Insignia* of great Authority in a Princes Court, he understood all of some secular greatnes; and that there were dignities of the like kind, which the rest might proportionably share in, as it appears others of them were not without such expectations when elsewhere they become petitioners to sit at his right and left hand in his Kingdom (the places or thrones of those *Phylarchs*, or Princes of Tribes that Sate next to the *royal throne*.) Now hereupon when our Saviour tells them what was first coming, and was nearer at hand, that he must be

be taken from them; Suffer many things, be deliver'd over unto death, &c. Peter very gravely takes on him to rebuke him, *Master favour thy self, this shall not be unto thee*: no by no means! Full of thoughts, no doubt his mind was at what was said. And whence did they proceed but from a *terrene Spirit*? And that the notion of worldly dignity had formed his mind, and made it intent upon a secular Kingdom. It was not abstractly his care for Christ himself he was so much troubled at; as what would become of his own great Designs and hopes. Therefore Our Saviour calls him *Sathan*, the name of that Arch-enemy, the usurping *God of this world*; who had as yet too much power over him, and tells him, *Thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men*, q. d.

A Satanical Spirit hath possessed thee, *get thee behind me.* And so seeks to repress that unsavoury steam of fuliginous earth-sprung thoughts, which he perceived arose in his mind.

It were a great felicity to be able to pass through this present state with that temper of mind as not to be liable to vexatious disappointments. And whereas the things that compose and make up this state are both *little and uncertain*, so that we may as well be disappointed in *having*, as in *not having* them; Our way were, here, *not to expect*. But to have our minds taken up with the things that are both *sure and great*, that is, *heavenly, eternal things*: Where we are liable to disappointment neither way. For these are things that  
we



we may, upon serious diligent seeking both most *surely obtain and possess*, and most *satisfyingly enjoy*. And the more our minds are imployed *this way*, the less will they incline *the other*. As no man that hath tasted old Wine presently desireth new, for he saith the old is better. The foretastes of Heaven are mortifying towards all terrene things.

No one that looks over that 11. to the *Hebrews* would think those *Worthies*, those *great Heroes* there reckoned up, troubled themselves much with thoughts of what they were to enjoy or suffer in this world. To see at what rate they lived, and acted, it is easy to collect they were not much concerned about temporary *futurities*. Whence was it? *they lived by that faith that was the substance of*  
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*things*

things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen, that exalted, raised, and refined their Spirits, and carried them above an empty, unsatisfying, vain World. And again

Eightly, (Which is most conjunct with this last) All such thoughtfulness is forbidden as proceeds from want of self-denial, patience, and preparedness for a suffering State. An heart fortifi'd and well postured for suffering is no susceptible Subject of those ill impressions. They fall into weak minds, tender, soft, and delicate, that reckon themselves created, and imbodyed in flesh, only to taste, and enjoy sensible delights: And that they came into this world to be entertain'd, and divert themselves with its still-fresh, and various

rious Rarities. We are deeply thoughtful because we cannot deny our selves, and bear the Cross; and have not learned to endure hardship, as good Souldiers of Christ Jesus. Our shoulders are not yet fitted to their burden.

Some perhaps think themselves too considerable, and persons of too great value to be sufferers. I am too good, my rank too high, my circumstances too-little vulgar. Hence, contempt, disgrace and other more sensibly pinching hardships are reckoned unsuitable for them, and only to be endured by persons of lower quality; so that the very thoughts of suffering are themselves unsufferable. Whereupon, when the exigency of the case urges, and they can no way decline, they cannot but think *strange of*  
F 3 *the*

the fiery trial, and count a strange thing is happened to them. The matter was very unfamiliar unto their thoughts, and they are as heifers wholly unaccustomed to this yoke. And now upon the near prospect of so frightful a Spectacle, as unavoidable suffering; a mighty resistless torrent of most turbid thoughts breaks in upon them at once. And they are (as a surprised Camp) all in confusion. Sorrowful, fearful, discontentful, repining, amazed thoughts do even overwhelm and deluge their Souls. And all these thoughts do even proceed from want of thinking. They think too much *now*, because, *before* they thought too little.

Whereas did we labour by degrees to frame our Spirits to it, to reconcile our minds to a suffering  
state

state (as they do horses intended for war, by a drum beaten under their nose, a pistol discharged or trumpet sounded at their very ear.) Did we inure our selves much to think of suffering, but yet to think little and diminishingly of it, and little of our selves, who may be the sufferers; I am (sure) not better than those that have suffered before me in former times, Such as of whom the world was not worthy; we should be in a good measure prepared for whatever can come, and so not be very thoughtful about any thing that shall.

II. That Thoughtfulness is forbidden too *which tends to evil*, such as hath an evil tendency.

1. Such as tends to evil      Negatively,

tively, that is to no good; All that is to no purpose. For we are apt when we see things go otherwise than we would have them, to exercise our contriving thoughts as deeply as if we were at the head of affairs, and had them in our own hand and power, and could at length turn the stream this way or that. But do we not busie our selve, about matters all the while wherein we can do nothing? When things are out of our power, are not of the *τὰ ἐξ ἡμῶν*, belong not to us, are without our reach, and we can have no influence upon them this way or that, yet we are prone over-earnestly to concern our selves: And as men (in that bodily exercise) when the Bowl is out of their hands variously writhe and distort their bodies; as if they could govern its motion by those odd and ridiculous motions

motions of theirs ; So are we apt to distort our minds into uncouth shapes and postures, to as little purpose, more pernicious, and upon a true account not less ridiculous. As our Saviour warns us to beware of *idle words*, such as can *do no work* (as the Greek imports) so we should count it disallowed us too ( for the same reason ) to think *idle thoughts*. The thoughtfulness our Saviour intends to forbid, you see how he characterizes, such as will not adde a cubit, not alter the Case one way or other, *i. e.* that is every way useles to valuable or good purposes. The *thinking power* is not given us to be used in vain ; Especially, whereas it might be imploy'd about matters of great importance to us at the same time.

Which serves to introduce a further

ther Character of undue Thoughtfulness, viz.

2. *Such as tends to divert us from our present duty.* Our Minds are not infinite, and cannot comprehend all things at once. We are wont so to excuse our not having attended to what another was saying to us, *that truly we were thinking on somewhat else.* Which is a good excuse, if neither the Person nor thing deserved more regard from us. But if what was propounded were somewhat *we ought* to attend to, 'tis plain we were diverted by thinking on what, at that time, *we ought not.*

When men are so *amused* with their own thoughts that they are put into a state of Suspence, and interruption from the proper business



nes of their calling, as Christians, or Men, or when their thoughts run into confusion, and are lost as to their present work, Such are, certainly, forbidden thoughts. When they think of every thing but what they should think of. A few passant thoughts would surely serve turn for what is not my busines. I have busines of my own that is *constant* and must be minded *at all times*, be *they* what they will. But when the times *generally* do not please us, upon every less grateful emergency we *overdoe* it in *thinking*! 'Tis *rational* and manly to behave our selves in the world as those that have a concern in it, *under* the common Ruler of it, and *for him*: and not to be negligent observers how things go in reference to his great and all-comprehending Interest. But the fault is, that  
our

our thoughts are apt to be *too intense*, and run into excess, that we crowd and throng our selves with thoughts, and think too much to think well, consider so much what others do or do not, that we allow no place or room for thoughts what we are to do our selves, even in the way of *that our constant duty*, which no times, or state of things can alter or make dispensable, *i. e.* To pray continually with chearful trust : To live in the love, fear, and service of God : To work out our own salvation : To seek the things that are above : To govern and cultivate our own spirits : To keep our hearts with all diligence : To do all the good we can to others, &c. As to these things we stand astonisht, and as men that cannot find their hands.

We

We should endeavour to range, and methodize our thoughts, to reduce them into some order ( which a croud admits not ) that we may have them distinctly applicable to the several occasions of the humane and Christian life. And with which useful order whatever consists not, we should reckon is sinful and forbidden.

3. Such as not only confounds, but torments the Mind within it self, gives it inward torture, distracts and racks it, as the word in the Text more peculiarly signifies ( *μεμρνάν* ) to pluck and rent a thing in pieces, part from part, one piece from another. Such a thoughtfulness as doth tear a mans Soul, and sever it from it self. There is another word of very  
Empha-

Emphatical import too which is used in forbidding the same evil, *Luk. 12. 29.* *μη μεσσησθε*, be not in Suspence, do not hover as Meteors, do not let your minds hang as in the Air, in a pendulous, uncertain, unquiet posture; or be not of an *inconsistent mind* as a Critical writer phrases it †, or as we may adde, that agrees not, that falls out and fights with it self, that with its own agitations sets it self on fire, as Meteors are said to do. Thoughts there are that prove as fire-brands to a mans Soul, or as Darts and Arrows to his Heart, that serve to no other purpose but to inflame and wound him. And when they are about such things (those *less-considerable* events of to morrow ) that all this might as well have been spared, and when we *disquiet our selves in vain*, it can-

not.

not be without great iniquity. God who hath greater dominion over us than we have over our selves, though he disquiet our Spirits *for great and important ends*; Put us to undergo much smart and torture in our own minds, cause us to be prickt to the Heart, and wounded, *in order to our cure*, and have appointed a state of torment for the *incurable*; yet he doth not afflict *willingly* nor grieve the children of men, . 'Tis a thing he wills not for it self. Those greater ends make it *necessary*, and put it without the compas of an indifferent choice. Much less should we choose our own torment as it were for torments sake, or admit thoughts which serve for no other purpose. 'Tis *undutiful*; because *we are not our own*; We violate, and discompose the Temples of the Holy Ghost, where

where since he vouchsafes to dwell, we should as much as in us is provide he may have an entirely peaceful and undisturbed dwelling. 'Tis *unnatural*, because 'tis done *to our selves*. A Felony *de se*. Who ever hated his own flesh? No man cuts and wounds and mangles himself; but a Mad-man, who is then not himself, is outed and divested of himself. He must be another thing from himself, e're he can do such acts of violence even to the bodily part, how much more valuable, and nearer us, and more *our self* is our Mind and Spirit?

But this is the case in the matter of inordinate *thoughts* and *care*. We breed the Worms that gnaw and corrode our Hearts. Worms? yea the Serpents, the Vultures, the Bears and Lions. Our own fancies

are

are the Creators of what doth thus  
raven, and prey upon our selves.  
Our own Creature rents and de-  
vours us.

4. *Such as excludes divine Consola-  
tion*, so that we cannot relish the  
comforts God affords us, to make  
our duties pleasant, and our af-  
flictions tolerable; or is ready to  
afford. *In the multitude of my thoughts  
within me, thy Comforts delight my Soul,*  
Psal. 94. 19. Those thoughts, if  
they were afflicting and trouble-  
some, they were not so without  
some due measure or limit, while  
they did not so fill the whole  
Soul as to exclude so needful a  
mixture.

But how intolerably sinful a State  
is it when the Soul is so filled, and  
taken up, prepossessed already, with

G

its

its own black thoughts, that there is no room for better! And its self-created cloud is so thick and dark that it resists the heavenly beams, and admits them not *in the ordinary way* to enter and insinuate. When the Disease defies the Remedy, and the Soul *refuses to be comforted*, as, *Psal. 77. 2.* This seems to have been the Psalmists case, not that he took up an explicit, formed resolution against being comforted; but that the present habit of his mind and spirit was such that it did not enter with him; and that the usual course did not succeed in order to it, for it follows, *I thought on God and was troubled*, which needs not to be understood so, as if the thoughts of God troubled him, but *though* he did think of God he was yet troubled. The thoughts of God were  
not



not the cause of his trouble, but the ineffectual means of his relief. Still he was troubled *notwithstanding* he thought of God, not *because*. For you see he was otherwise troubled, and saies, *In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord.* He took the course which was wont not to fail, but his mind was so full of troublous thoughts before, that when he remembered God, it proved but a weak essay. The strength of his Soul was preingaged the other way, and the Stream was too violent to be checkt by that feebler breath which he now only had to oppose it. Though God can *arbitrarily*, and often doth, put forth that Power as to break and scatter the cloud, and make all clear up on a suddain; Yet also, often, he withholds in some displeasure that more potent influ-

ence, and leaves things to follow, with us, their own natural course; lets our own Sin correct us, and suffers us to feel the smart of our own rod. For we should have withstood beginnings, and have been more early in applying the Remedy before things had come to this ill passe. Because we did not when we better could, set our selves to consider, and strive and pray effectually, the distemper of our spirits is now grown to that height that we would and cannot. In that great distresse which befel David at *Ziglag*, when he finds his goods rifled, his nearest Relatives made Captives, that City it self the place of his repose, the solace of his exile, reduced to a ruinous heap; His Guard, his Friends, the companions of his flight, and partakers of all his troubles and dangers,

gers, become his most dangerous enemies, for they mutiny and conspire against him, and speak of Stoning him: The common calamity imbitters their spirits, and they are ready to fly upon him, as if he had done the *Amalekites* part, been the common enemy, and the Author of all that Mischiefs; In this most perplexing case he was quicker in taking the proper course, immediately turns his thoughts upwards while they were flexible, and capable of being directed, and comforted himself in the Lord his God. All that afflicting thoughtfulness which is the consequent of our neglecting seasonable endeavours to keep our minds under Government and restraint, while they are yet Governable; and which hereupon renders the consolations of God small, and

tastles to us, is certainly of the prohibited sort.

5. Such as tends to put us on a sinful course for the avoiding dangers that threaten us. When we think of sinning to day, lest we should suffer to morrow. If it be but one particular act of sin by which we would free our selves from a present danger, or much more if our thoughts tempt and solicit us to a course of Apostacy, which ( *Psal.* 85. 8. ) is a returning to folly. The thing now speaks it self, *the thought of foolishness is Sin*, *Prov.* 24. 9. When upon viewing the State of affairs a mans thoughts shall suggest to him, I can never be safe I perceive in this way ; Great Calamities threaten the Profession, I have hitherto been of. And hence he begins to project the changing

his Religion, to meditate a revolt. In this case *deliberasse est descivisse*. A disloyal thought hath in it the nature of the *formed evil* to which it tends. Here is seminal Apostacy. The Cockatrice Egg, long enough hatcht, becomes a Serpent; And therefore ought to be crusht betime. A mans heart now begins sinfully to tempt him, ( as he is never tempted with *effect*, till he be led away by his own heart and enticed, *Jam. 1. 14.* ) And now is the conception of that Sin, which, being finished, is eventually mortal, and brings forth Death, *vers. 15.*

6. Such as tends unto *visible dejection and despondency*, such as in the course of our walking shall make a shew, and express it self to the discouragement of the friends

of Religion or the triumph of its enemies. It may be read in a mans Countenance many times when he is unduely thoughtful. Cares furrow his Face and form his deportments. His looks, his meen, his behaviour shew a thoughtful sadnes.

Now when such *appearances* exceed our remaining constant cause of visible chearfulness, the thoughtfulness whence they proceed cannot but be undue and sinful. As when the ill aspect of affairs on our Interests clothes our faces with fear and sorrow; Our countenances are fall'n, and speak our hearts sunk, so that we even tell the World we despair of our cause, and our God. This, besides the *distrust*, which is the internal, *evil cause* spoken of before, tends to a  
very

very pernicious effect; To confirm the Atheistical world, to give them the day, to say with them the same thing, and yield them the matter of their impious boast, *there is no help for them in God.* And all this, when there is a true, unchangeable reason for the contrary temper and deportment. For still that one thing *the Lord reigns*, hath more in it to fortifie and strengthen our Hearts and compose us to chearfulness, and ought to signifie more with us to this purpose, than all the ill appearances of things in this world can do to our rational dejection. The Psalmist, *Psalms 96. 11, 12, 13.* reckons all the World should ring of it, that the whole Creation should partake from it a diffusive Joy. *Let the Heavens rejoyce, and let the earth be glad: let the Sea roar*  
and

and the fulnes thereof; Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein: then shall all the Trees of the Wood rejoyce, before the Lord, for he cometh, he cometh to iudge the earth, &c. He accounts all the Universe should even be cloathed hereupon with a smiling verdure. And what? are we only to except our selves, and be an anomalous sort of Creatures? shall we not partake in that common dutiful Joy, and fall into consort with the adoring, loyal Chorus? Will we cut our selves off from this gladsome obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole World, shall it only leave our Faces covered with clouds, and a mournful sadnes?

Briefly, that we may summe up the evil of this prohibited thoughtfulness,



fulnes, as it is to be estimated from its ill effects to which it tends, whatsoever, in that kind, hath a tendency either dishonourable and injurious to God, or hurtful to our selves, we are to reckon into this Classe, and count it forbidden us.

Wherefore it remains that we go on to the other part of the intended discourse, viz.

II. *The enforcement of the prohibition.* For which purpose we shall take into consideration the following part of the Verse; *To morrow shall take thought for the things of it self, sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.*

The evil forbidden is *carefulness* about the future, as we read it,  
taking

taking thought, which is a more general expression than the Greek word doth amount to. All *thinking* is not *caring*. This is one *special* sort of *thoughts* that is here forbidden, *careful thoughts*, and one *special* sort of *care*, not about duty but event, and about *Event* wherein it doth not depend upon our duty, that is, considered abstractly from it, and so the thing intended is, that doing all that lies within the compass of our duty to promote any good *Event*, or to hinder bad, that then we should cease from solicitude about the success. From *such Solicitude*, most especially, as shall be either distrustful, or disquieting, or more generally, that shall be, any way, either injurious to God, or prejudicial to our selves.

Now for the pressing of this matter

matter upon our practice, these subjoyned words may be apprehended to carry, either but *one and the same* argument, in both the clauses; or else *two distinct ones*; according as the *former* shall be diversly understood. For,

1. These words [ to morrow shall take care for the things of it self ] are understood by some to carry, but this sense with them. q. d. *To Morrow will bring its own cares with it, and those perhaps afflicting enough, and which will give you sufficient trouble when the day comes. To morrow will oblige you to be careful about the things thereof, and find you business and molestation enough. Which is but the same thing in sense with what is imported in the following words. [ Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof. ]*

2. Or

2. Or else those former words may be understood thus, [To morrow shall take care for the things of it self;] i. e. *To morrow and the things of to morrow shall be sufficiently cared for otherwise, without your previous care.* There is one that can do it sufficiently, do not you impatiently and to no purpose concern your selves. It is implied there is some one else to take that care, whose proper business it is; The great God himself is meant, though that is not expressly said, the design being but to exclude us; and to say *who should not take care, not who should.* That is therefore left at large, and express'd with that indifferency, as if it were intended to signifie to us, that it was no matter who took care so we did not. That we should rather leave  
it

it to *the morrow* to put on a person; and take care; than be our selves concern'd; that whose part soever it is, it was none of ours. A form of Speech not unexampled elsewhere in Scripture. *Let the dead bury their dead, only follow thou me;* q. d. Sure some body will perform that part. It will be done by one or other, more properly than by you, who have devoted your self to me, and are become a Sacred Person (not permitted by the Law to meddle with a dead body, as a learned Person glosses upon that place.) And, in common Speech, especially of Superiours to Inferiours, such *Antanaclasses* (as the figure is called) are frequent. And the same word used over again, when in the repetition (though here it be otherwise) we intend not any certain sense; more than

than that we would, with the more smartnes and pungency, repress an inclination we observe in them to somewhat we would not have them do, or more earnestly presse the thing we would have done. So that we need not in that expression trouble our selves to imagine any such mystical meaning, as, Let them that are dead in sin bury them that are dead for sin; Or that it intends more, than, Be not concerned about that matter. And, to shew the absolutenes of the Command, it is given in that form of words that it might be understood he should not concern himself about that business in any case whatsoever. q. d. Suppose, what is not likely, that there were none else that would take care; or none but the Dead to bury the Dead; yet know, that at  
this

this time I have somewhat else to do for you: When it is, in the mean time tacitely supposed, and concealed, that the matter might well enough be left to the care of others. So here, while it is silently intimated that the things of *the morrow* shall be otherwise sufficiently cared for, by that Wise and Mighty Providence that governs all things, and runs through all time, yet our *intemperate* solicitude is, in the mean time, so absolutely forbidden, that we are not to be allowed in it, though there were none, but the *feigned person of the morrow*, to take care for what should then occur. Yet the main stresse is laid upon the concealed intimation all the while, as a thing whereof he was secure, and would have his Disciples be too, that the busines of providing for *the morrow*.

H

row would be done sufficiently without them.

And now according to this sense of those words, there are two distinct considerations, contained, in this latter part of the Verse, both which we shall severally make use of, for the purpose for which they are propounded by our Saviour, viz. the pressing of what he had enjoyed in the former part of the verse.

And we may thus distinctly  
Entitle them { The Unprofitableness, and  
                                  { The Hurtfulness  
of this forbidden care.

1. The former may well bear that title; *The inutility or unprofitableness of our Care. To morrow shall*



shall take care for the things of it self,  
i. e. they shall be sufficiently cared  
for without you.

Now under that head of *unprofitableness*, we may conceive these  
two things to be comprehended.

- viz. { 1. That we do not need to  
attempt any thing.  
2. That we can effect nothing,  
by that prohibited care  
of ours.

That we neither *need*, nor ( to  
any purpose ) *can* concern our selves  
about such matters.

1. *That we do not need.* They  
are under the direction of his Pro-  
vidence who can manage them  
well enough himself. And unto  
this head several things do belong,

which if they be distinctly considered, will both *discover* and highly *aggravate* that offence of immoderate thoughtfulness. As,

1. That, through that needles care of ours, *we shall but neglect* ( as was formerly said ) *our most constant indispensable duty.* That will not be done as it ought. *We should study to be quiet, and do our own business,* as is elsewhere enjoined, upon another account. We have a duty incumbent, which, what it is we are told, in the general, and, at the same time encouraged against interrupting care, *Psal. 73. 3. Trust in the Lord and do good, and you shall dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed.* Some perhaps are apt to have many a careful thought of this sort. "Alas! We are afraid  
"the condition of the Land may  
"be

“be such as we shall not be able  
“to live in it.” No, ( ’tis said )  
never trouble your thoughts about  
that. Only neglect not your own  
part. *Trust in the Lord, and do good,*  
and ’twill be well enough. You  
shall dwell in the Land, and veri-  
ly you shall be fed.

2. *We shall make our selves busie-*  
*bodies in the matters of another,* 1 Pet.  
4. 15. as it were, play the Bishops  
in anothers Dioces, as the word  
there imports. We shall but be  
over officious, and undecently prag-  
matical in intermedling. Our great  
care should be, when we count  
upon Suffering, that we may not  
suffer *indecently*, or with disreputa-  
tion ( in their account who are  
fittest to judge ) much lesse *inju-*  
*riously* to a good cause, and a good  
Conscience. Which we cannot fail

to do, if we suffer out of our own place and Station, and having intruded our selves into the affairs and concerns that belong to the management of another hand. And,

3. It is to be considered *who it is* that we shall affront, and whose Province we invade in so doing, viz. of one that can well enough manage all the affairs of to morrow, and of all future time, *the Lord of all Time*, in whose hands *all our Times* are, and *all time*. A Province in the administration whereof there is no danger of defect or Error. And,

4. It is to be considered that we shall do so, *not only without a Call, but against a Prohibition*. It is reckoned, among men, a rudenes,  
to

to intrude into the affairs of another uninvited, how much more if forbidden? It gives distaste and offence; and the reason is plain, for it implies a supposition of their weakness, and that they are not able to manage their own affairs themselves. And as we thereby cast contempt upon another, so, at the same time, we unduely exalt and magnifie our selves, as if we understood better. Such a comparison cannot but be thought odious. But now take this as an addition to the former consideration, and the matter rises high, and carries the same intimation with it in reference to the All-wise and Almighty God. No? Is not he likely to bring matters to any good pass without us? And are we therefore so concernedly looking over the shoulder; thrusting in our

eye, and sending forth our cares to run and range into his affairs and busines? This is a wearisom Impertinence. A prudent man would not endure it.

Nor are those words unapplicable to this purpose, *Seems it a small thing to you to weary men, but you will weary my God also?* Isa. 7. 13. They were spoken to a purpose not unlike. For observe the occasion. There were at that time the two Kings with their Combined Power, of Syria and Israel come up against Jerusalem and the house of David, meaning the King Abaz. It is said hereupon of him, and the People with him, *Their hearts were moved as the Trees of the Wood are moved with the wind.* Full of thoughts, of cares, and fears they were, no doubt. O! what will

will become of this matter? what will be the Event? And the Prophet comes with a comfortable message to them from God. But their Hearts were so prepossessed with their own fears, it signifies nothing. A confirmation is offered, and refused. The pretence was, he would not tempt God by asking a Sign even when he was bidden. An hypocritical pretence, made only to cover a latent distrust. Thereupon, saith the Prophet, Is it a small thing to *weary men* ( meaning himself who was but the Messenger ) but that you *will weary my God also?* i. e. who sent him; and who went not about to put the affrighted Prince, and his People, upon any thing, but to *trust him and be quiet*: No agitation of whose minds was required to their safety. They are  
not

not directed, as if all lay upon them, to hold a Council, and contrive, themselves, ( at this time ) the means of their preservation. Nor should they, with disturbed minds. Neither are we ( in the sense that hath been given ) required, or allowed to use our care in reference to the things of *to morrow*. The stress of affairs lies not upon us. The Events that belong to *to morrow*, or the future time, whatever it be, will be brought about, whether we so care or care not. Our anxiety is needless in the case. What will not to morrow come and carry all its Events in it that belong to it, without us? will not the Heavens roll without us? and the Sun rise and set? the Evening come and also the Morn? the dayes, and all that belongs to the several daies of succeeding time? will not all be  
be



be brought about without our care think we? how was it before we were born?

2. There is also comprehended besides, under that head of *unprofitableness*, our *impotency* to effect any thing by our care. As we do not need, so nor are we able. That is unprofitable, which will not serve turn, nor do our business. This forbidden care leaves things but as we found them. 'Tis true, that may be some way *useful*, that is not *absolutely necessary*, but if besides that no necessity there be also an *absolute uselessness*, the argument is much stronger. All this prohibited care of ours cannot contribute any thing, to the hindering of bad Events or promoting of good. And that, neither as to our own private affairs nor ( much lesse )

as

as to those that are of publick concernment.

1. Not as to our own private affairs, which the series of our Saviours discourse hath directer reference unto, *what we shall eat, and drink, and how be cloathed.* How to maintain and support life, and adde to our dayes and the comfort of them. We cannot adde ( 'tis said ) so much as *one cubit* ( *vers.* 27. ) [ to our stature ] So we read that word, which perhaps ( by the way ) as a noted Expositor observes, may better be read [ Age ] The word signifies both. It would seem indeed something an enormous addition to have a cubit added to the stature of a grown man, but the same word ( *ηλικία* ) signifying also *age*, that seems here the fitter translation

tion. *q. d.* Which of you by taking thought can make the least addition to his own time? Nor is it unusual to speak of measures of *that kind*, in relation to time, as a *Span*, an *hand breadth*, and the like. And so is *cubit* as capable of the same application. Our anxiety can neither adde more, nor lesse.

2. Much less can it influence the common and publick affairs. Our Solicitude, what will become of these things? How shall the Christian or Protestant Interest subsist? much more how shall it ever come to thrive and prosper in the World? so low, so deprest and despised as it may seem? How will it be with it to morrow? or hereafter in future time? What doth it contribute? I speak not to the exclusion of Prayer, nor of a duti-

dutiful, affectionate concernedness, that excludes not a chearful, submissive trust; and what will more than this avail? If we adde more, will that addition mend the matter? or do we indeed think, when the doing of our duty prevails not, that our anxiety and care beyond our duty shall? Can *that* change times and seasons, and mend the state of things *to morrow* or the *next day*? Will to morrow become, by means of it, a fairer or a calmer day, or be without it a more stormy one? We might as well think, by our care, to order the Celestial Motions, to govern the Tides, and retard or hasten the Ebbs and Floods; or by our Breath check and countermand the course of the greatest Rivers. We, indeed, and all things that time contains and measures, are carried as in a swift stream,

stream, or on rapid Floods. And a man, at Sea, might as well attempt, by thrusting or pulling the sides of the Ship that carries him, to hasten or slacken its motion, as we by our vexatious care to check or alter the motions of Providence this way or that. Do we think to posture things otherwise than God hath done? Will we move the Earth from its Center? Where will we find another Earth whereon to set our foot?

2. We have to consider not only the unprofitableness but hurtfulness of this forbidden Care. It not only doth no good, but it is sure to do us a great deal of harm. That is the consideration intimated in the latter words, *sufficient for the day is the evil thereof*. We shall but accumulate evils unto our selves by

by it, to no purpose. Our undue solicitude cannot adde to our time or comforts (as was said) but it may much diminish, and detract from them. Whereas every several day that passeth, may have enough in it, and be of it self sufficiently fraught with Perplexity, trouble, and sorrow. *All that*, added to the foregoing burden of excessively careful forethoughts, may overwhelm and sink us.

There are sundry particular considerations that fall in here also.

1. That by this means we shall suffer the same thing over and over, which we needed not suffer more than once. It obtained for a Proverb among the † *Arabians* [An affliction is but one to him that suffers it, but to him that with fear expects

† The Collection of Arabian Proverbs illustrated by the notes of Jos. Scalig. and Erpen.

it, double. ] I shall suffer the evil of to morrow this day and to morrow too. Yea, and by this course, I may bring all the evil of all my future time, into each several day, and may suffer the same affliction a thousand times over, which the benignity of Providence meant, only, for my present exercise, when he should think it most fit and seasonable to lay it on.

2. I may, by this means, suffer, *in my own foreboding Imagination*, many things that *really*, I shall never suffer at all, for the events may never happen, the forethoughts whereof do now afflict me. And what a foolish thing is it to be troubled before-hand at that which for ought I know will never be, and to make a certain evil of an uncertain !

I

3. And

3. And it is further to be considered, that *all the trouble I suffer in this kind is self trouble.* We therein but afflict our selves. And it addes a great Sting to affliction that I am the Author of it to my self. For besides the unnaturallnes of being a *Self-tormentor* ( which was formerly noted ) it is the more afflicting, upon review, by how much more easily it was avoidable. We are stung with the reflection on our own folly, as any man is apt to be, when he considers his having run himself into trouble, which, by an ordinary Prudence he might have escaped. With what regret may one look back, upon many by-past daies, wherein I might have served God with chearfulness in my calling, *walking in the light of the Lord,* which I have turned into daies of pen-



penfive darknes, to my felf, by only my own black and difmal thoughts ! And fo by having drawn *unjuftly* the evils of future time into my prefent day, I come to draw *juftly* the evils of my former time ( and of a worfe kind ) into it alfo. What God inflicts, I cannot avoid, but am patiently to fubmit to it ; which carries its own relief in it, but I owe no fuch Patience to my felf, for having foolifhly been my own Afflicter, with needles and avoidable trouble.

4. I fhall Suffer hereby in a more grievous kind, than, if only the feared evil had actually befall'n me. It being the nature of external evils (which the prohibited thoughtfulness chiefly refers to ) that they commonly afflict more in expectation, than in the actual Suffering of them

them ( as was a wise Heathens observation ) as external good things *please more*, in the *expectation*, than they do in the *fruition*: When ( as he also observes ) as to the good and evil things of the contrary kind, the case is contrary. And how often do we find those evils *in the bearing*, light, and to have little in them, that look't big, seemed formidable, and carried a dreadful appearance with them at a distance? What a fearful thing is Poverty to a mans imagination, and yet who live merryer lives than Beggars? We therefore, by this anticipation, Suffer in a worse kind. And if we do not make an affliction, of no affliction, we make of a lighter one a more grievous. We turn a future outward affliction, into a present inward and mental one. The affliction of forbidden

den care falls upon the mind, whereas the object of that care, is only an affliction to the outward man. How much more of Suffering is an intelligent Spirit capable of, than a meer lump of animated Flesh or Clay? Can my body ever feel so much as my Soul can? *Pleasure* and *Pain* are always commensurate to the *principle of life* by which we are capable of the one or the other. How unspeakably greater are the Pleasures of the Mind than those of the Body! and so, consequently, are mental afflictions, than corporal. The Providence of God, it may be, intends some affliction to our outer man to morrow; but, in the mean time, our expectations, and anxious thoughts are torturing our Spirits to day, while, perhaps, we have burden enough otherwise.

5. And as the Affliction of anxious forethought and care, is more grievous in the kind, *so it is likely to be very intense, in the degree, of that kind*; beyond what the other sort of Affliction may be. For whereas *the other* may be, *more directly from God, and this* (as was said) *from my self.* God Afflicts with Wisdom, Mercy and Moderation. But this self-affliction proceeds from *the want of Prudence*, and is without Mercy. So that the moderating principles are wanting. Men, commonly, know no limit or measure in their thus afflicting themselves. Never think it enough. Their own Passions are their Tormentors, which, having broke loose from under the government of their Reason and Prudence, run into wild rage and fury. What a  
misc-

misery is it to have such fierce Creatures preying upon us! God would never use us so unmercifully, as we do our selves. Or, if he suffer wicked men to be our afflictors, that know no pity, they cannot reach our Spirits: And his mercy towards us is still the same. He can restrain or overrule them at pleasure; or infuse such consolations, as, when we are thus afflicting our selves, we cannot expect; and which that self-affliction doth *naturally* exclude. 'Tis unconceivable what evils we superadde to our own daies, beyond that which he counts *sufficient*. Nor do we design our own good in it, as he doth when he afflicts. Which design, and end, measures and limits the means, that they may not exceed the proportion requisite thereto.

6. All this superadded evil we bring upon our selves *against a Rule* (which is fit to be again noted) for both the considerations that are subjoyned, must be considered, as relative to the precept. We break first the *Law*, before we break *our own Peace*. Our Redeemer and Lord hath interposed his Authority, as a bar against our troubling our selves. And so fenced our Peace and comfort for us, that we have no way to come at our own trouble, but by breaking through the boundary of this *Law*. This then is a very pestilent addition to the evil of *this day*, that we draw upon our selves by our taking thought for *to morrow*. For we mingle the evil of Sin with that of Affliction. We deal very ill with our selves in this,

this, to taint our affliction with so foul a thing; which might have been *meer* affliction without that imbittering accursed mixture.

And it is to be considered, that this draws a consequence with it (besides the depraving nature of sin, and the corroding nature, especially, of *this sin*,) 'Tis, as it is *sin*, punishable. And so, as we bring the evil of to morrow, into this day; we may bring the evil of this day into to morrow. God may be offended, and frown to morrow, because we were no more apt to be governed by him to day. And as we drew an imaginary cloud from the next day into *this*, it may, the next, return upon us in a *real Storm*. But whether it be so or no, it highly aggravates the matter that,

7. We

7. We herein offend, not only against the *Justice* of the Law, but against the *Mercy* of it, the Kindnes, Goodnes and Compassion imported in it. This, as it was *intimated* before, so needs to be more deeply considered *by it self*. It ought indeed to be acknowledged concerning the general frame, and System, of all the divine Lawes, that they are *visibly*, and with admirable suitablenes, contrived for the good and felicity of mankind, and seem but obligations upon us to be happy. Such as in the keeping whereof there is great reward. And, in this particular one, how observably hath our Lord, as it were studied our quiet, and the repose of our minds! How. ( especially ) doth the Benignity and Kindnes of the holy Law-giver  
ap-

Psal. 119.



appear in it! upon comparing *this consideration* with the precept it self. *Take no thought for to morrow, sufficient for the day is the evil of it.*

q. d. I would not have you overburden'd; I would have you be without care. It imports a tenderness of our *present comfort*; which

he many other wayes expresses of our *future safety and blessednes*. q. d.

I would have you go comfortably through this World, where you are in a Pilgrimage and a wayfaring condition; I would not

have you oppress'd, nor your Spirits bowed down with too heavy a burden. And 'tis, elsewhere, in-

culcated. *Casting all your care on him, for he careth for you, 1 Pet. 5.*

*7. In nothing be careful (Phil. 4. 6.) but, in all things, let your requests be made known to God, with thanks-*

*giving; And the Peace of God (so it im-*

immediately follows ) *which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds. Commit thy way to the Lord, devolve it on him, as the word signifies, Psal. 37.5. Trust also in him, and he will bring it to passe.* If we be so wise as to observe his rule and design, we shall be wise for our selves. And that tranquillity and calmnes of Spirit, which many Heathens have so highly magnified, and which *their Philosophy sought, our Religion will possesse and enjoy.*

But if we neglect, and disregard him herein; we shall bring an evil into to day that neither belongs to this day, nor to any other. It is true indeed, God doth often point us out the day, wherein we must suffer such and such external evils, and as it were say to

us, *Now is your day of Suffering.* Sometimes by his Providence alone, when I have no way of escape; sometimes by the concurrence of his Word and Providence, when the one hemmes me in, on the one hand, the other on the other. He hath *now* set me a day for suffering, in this or that kind, but none for sinning in this kind, nor in any other. Why shall I draw in evils to this day, from to morrow, that belong neither to this day nor to morrow?

The summe is, whether we regard our Innocency or our Peace, whether we would express Reverence to God, or a due regard to our selves. If we would do the part either of pious and religious, or of rational and prudent men, we are to lay a restraint upon our  
selves

selves in this Matter. Have we nothing to employ our thoughts about, that concerns us more? nothing wherein we may use them to better purpose? Is there nothing wherein we are more left at liberty? or nothing about which we are more bound in duty to think? Unles we reckon that *thoughts* are absolutely free, and that we may use our *thinking power* as we please; And that the divine Government doth not extend to our minds? (which if it do not, we confound *Gods Government*, and *Mans*; and there is an end of all internal Sin, and Duty; and of the first and most radical differences of Moral good and evil) we can never justifie our selves in such a *range* of thoughts and cares, as this we have been speaking of. And 'tis very unreasonable to conti-

nue

nue a course we cannot justify. A transient action done against a formed judgment would be reflected on with regret and shame by such as are not arriv'd to that pitch as not to care what they do. But to persist in a condemned course of actions, must, much more, argue a profligate Conscience enfeebled and mortify'd to that degree as to have little sense left of right and wrong.

Where it is so, somewhat else is requisite to a cure, than *meer representing* the evil of that course. What *that* can do hath been try'd already. And when men have been once *used to Victory*, over their own Judgments, and Consciences; every former defeat makes the next the easier; till, at length, *light and conscience* become such contemptible baffled things, as to signifie nothing

thing at all, to the governing of Practice, this way or that.

The only thing that can work a redress, is *to get the temper of our spirits cured*; which will mightily *facilitate* the work and business of Conscience, and is necessary, even where it is most lively and vigorous. For to be only *quick at discerning* what we should be, and do, signifies little against a disinclined heart. Therefore for the rectifying of *that*, and that *our Inclinations*, as well as *our Judgments*, may concur, and fall in with *our Duty* in this matter, I will only recommend in order hereto by way of direction (among *many* that might be thought on) *these two things*.

1. *That we use more earnest endeavour to be, habitually, under Government,*

ment, in reference to our thoughts, and the inward workings of our Spirits. For can we doubt of the obligation of the many precepts that concern, immediately, the inner man? To love, to trust, to fear, to rejoyce in God, &c. What becomes of all Religion, if the vital principles of it be thought unnecessary? Do not all the Laws of God that enjoyn us any Duty, lay their first obligation upon our inward man? Or do they only oblige us to be *Hypocrites*? and to seem what we are not? And why do we here distinguish; and think that, by some precepts, God intends to oblige us; and by others he means no such thing, but to leave us to our Liberty? Or would not those which we will confes more indispensable (viz. such as have been instanc't in) exclude the careful  
K thoughts,

thoughts, we speak of, about the events of to morrow? For can an heart much conversant in the explicit acts of love to God, trust in him, the fear of him, &c. be much liable to these forbidden cares?

Nor, surely, can it be matter of doubt with us, whether God observe the *thoughts* and *motions* of our Souls? For can we think that he will give rules about things wherein he will exercise no judgment?

Psal. 94<sup>a</sup>

The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man that they are vanity; And are any more vain than these? Do we Christians need an heathen instructor

Seneca

to tell us "We ought alwaies so  
 "to live, as under view; and so  
 "to think, as if there were some  
 "one that may, and can, inspect  
 "and look into our innermost breast.  
 "To what purpose is it that we  
 "keep



“keep any thing secret from man?  
 “nothing is shut up to God.  
 “He is a-midst our minds, and  
 “comes among our most inward  
 “thoughts.” Let us labour to  
*accustom* and *use* our Spirits to *sub-*  
*jection*, to have them compos’d,  
 and formed to awful apprehensions  
 of that Authority and Government  
 which the *Father of Spirits* claims,  
 and hath establish’d *immediately over*  
*themselves*. This, though it be  
 more general, will yet reach this  
 case.

2. That we aim at being, in the  
 temper of our Spirits, more indifferent  
 about all future events, that lye within  
 the compass of time. Let us not  
 account them so very considera-  
 ble. Time will soon be over, and  
 is too narrow a Sphære for us  
 to confine our minds unto. We

should endeavour a greater *amplitude of Thoughts*. As he that hath large, and noble designs, looks, with Great Indifference, upon smaller matters wherein *they* are not concerned. One that Fears God, and works Righteousness, believes a World to come, and lives in entire devotedness to the Redeemer, ( the constitution of whose Kingdom relates entirely to that other World ) hath little cause to concern himself about interferences, which, as to his part in *that world*, will not alter his case. We are not the *sure* of Heaven, if the Sun shine out to *morrow*; nor the lesse sure, if it shine not.

For the obtaining of this *dutiful* and *peaceful Indifferency*, it concerns us to be *much* in Prayer. For,  
both,

both, that happy temper of mind is part of the *Wisdom*, which if we Jam. 1. 5. want, we are to ask of God. And it directly eases us of the burden of our affairs to commit them in that way; as is signifi'd in that mentioned Scripture, *Phil. 4. 6.* Nor was any thing more agreeable, than that our Lord teaching us (in that admirable *Summary of Petitions* given in this same Sermon on the Mount) to Pray every day for our daily bread, should here forbid us to take thought for the morrow. As also, in the gathering of *Manna*, no care was to be extended further than the present day †. We have easie access daily. Story tells us the poor *Chineses* could not enter into the presence of their *Tartarian Prince*, with never so just a complaint, without submitting, first, to an hundred *Bastinado's*,

† Both which Remarks are noted by some Expositors.

as the condition of their admittance. Would we thankfully accept, and use as we might, the *constant liberty* we have upon the *easiest terms*, how much would it contribute both to our *innocency* and *quiet* !

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AN

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AN  
APPENDIX

To the foregoing  
DISCOURSE,  
CONCERNING

The immoderate Desire of  
knowing things to come.

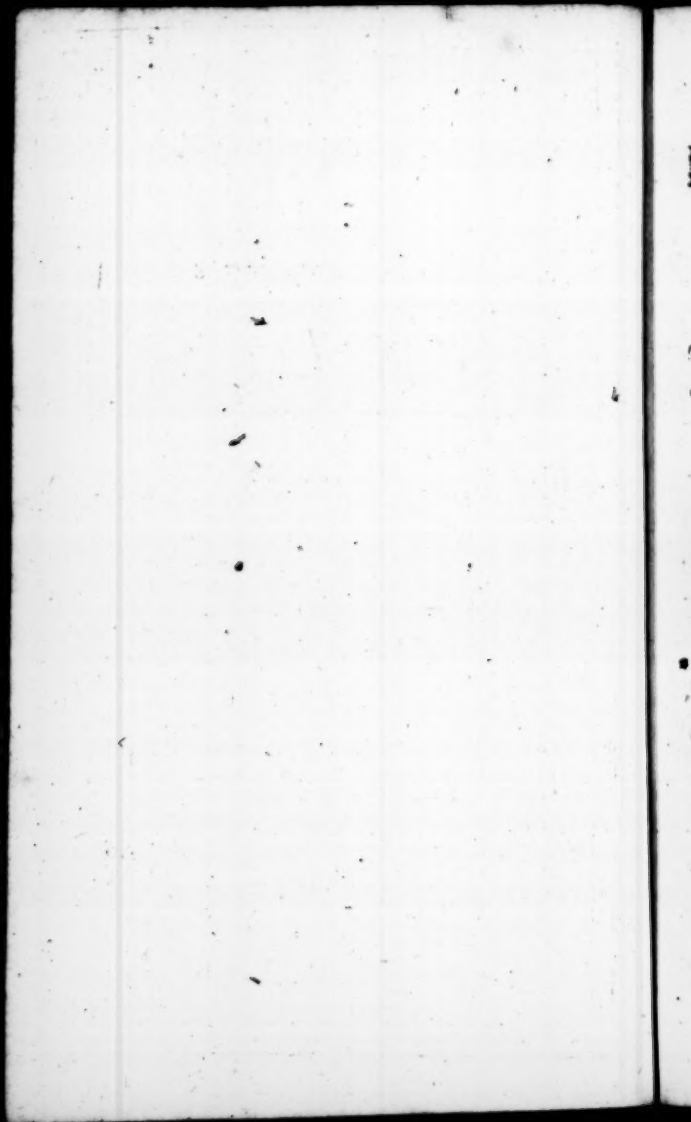
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By the same Author.

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AN

## APPENDIX, &amp;c.



HERE is yet another very vicious habit of mind, besides this of taking thought about the events of future time ; viz. *An intemperate Appetite of fore-knowing them.* Which hath such affinity, and lies so contiguous, and bordering to the former, that it will not be incongruous to adde somewhat concerning it; And, which is of so ill and pernicious an import, that it will deserve some

some endeavour to shew how we may discern and repress it.

And it may be requisite to discourse somewhat to this purpose, both for the Vindication of *Gods Wisdom*, and *Goodnes*, in confining our knowledge of the events of future time, within so narrow bounds and limits; And that serious Chistians may the more effectually consult the ease and quiet of their own minds, by keeping themselves contentedly, as to this matter, within the bounds which he hath set them.

This appetite of foreknowing is only to be animadverted on so far as it is inordinate, and a distemper. Our business therefore here must be



- { 1. To specify and distinguish  
 this distemper.  
 { 2. To offer somewhat for the  
 Cure of it.

1. For the *finding out* and *Specifying* of it. It is not to be doubted but there may be a faultiness in the *defect*. A too great listlessness, and indisposition to *look forward*. Which indisposition will appear blameable, when it proceeds either

1. From a *sensual slothfulness* of temper that addicts us wholly to the *present*. It is too much *a-kin* to the *beast*, to be totally taken up with what *now* pleases. When *all the Soul* lies in the senses, and we mind nothing but the grateful relishes of our present and private enjoyments, are quite unconcern'd about

about the State of the World, or the Christian Interest, or what shall hereafter come of the affairs of *our Countrey*, in *civil*, or *religious* respects. When we are held in a lazie indifferency concerning the State of things in succeeding times and ages; are conscious of no desire of any hopeful prospect for Posterity, and those that shall come after us. 'Tis all one with us whether we know them likely to be Civil or Barbarian, Christian or Pagan, Freemen or Slaves, because we care not which of these we be our selves, so we can but *eat on*, and enjoy our own undisturbed ease and pleasure. This is a fatal mortification of the *appetite of foreknowing*. For it destroyes it quite, when it should but rectifie and reduce it within due bounds. And  
in

in what degree *that*, or *any other* inclination ought to dye, it much imports what kills it; because that which doth so, succeeds into the dominion, and hath all the Power in me which it before had. And surely no worse thing can rule over me, than a sensual Spirit; that binds me down, and limits me to this *spot of Earth*, and *point of Time*. Or if it proceed

2. From a *weak and childish dread of all futurity*. As children apprehend nothing but Bugbears, and Hobgoblins, and frightful Images, and appearances in the dark. This ill disposition is very intimately conjunct with the former. When a sensual mind, finding it self already well entertained with the gratifications of *the present time*, cleaves

cleaves to it, and every thought of a change is mortal. 'Tis death to admit the apprehension of a new Scene. 'Tis as true indeed, that the same temper of mind, in more ungrateful, present circumstances, runs all into discontent, and affectation of change (as will be further shewn hereafter in the proper place;) But in this region of changes, 'tis most *imprudent*, and *incongruous*, to let the Mind be unchangeably fixt upon any external State, and posture of things; or irreconcilably averse to any. It is becoming, it is laudable and glorious, with a manly and a truly Christian fortitude, to dare to face *futurity* how formidably soever any thing within the compas of time may look. For, certainly, so far as we ought to be mortifi'd to the knowledge of future things, it  
ought

ought to proceed from some better principle, than only our being afraid to know them.

But, that distemper of mind which is now more principally to be noted and reprov'd, lies rather in the *excesse*. That therefore it may be distinctly characteriz'd and understood, I shall endeavour to shew

1. *When this appetite of foreknowing the events of future time, is not to be thought excessive; Or how far a disposition to enquire into such matters is allowable and fit.*
2. *When, by its excesse, it doth degenerate into a distemper so as to become the just matter of reprehension and redresse.*
  1. There-

1. Therefore (on the Negative part) we are not to think it disallowed us. Yea it cannot but be our duty, to have a *well proportion'd* desire, of understanding so much of future Event, as God hath thought fit to reveal in his Word. As he hath *there* foretold very great things concerning the State of the Christian Church and Interest to the end of the World. Which Predictions it cannot be supposed, are made publick and offered to our view to be neglected and overlook't. Only we must take care that our endeavour to understand them, and the time and labour we employ therein, be commensurate to the Circumstances of our Condition, to our ability and advantage for such more difficult disquisitions, and be duly proportioned  
between

between them, and other things ; that may be of equal, or greater moment to us:

2. Nor, again, is it liable to exception, if we only desire to make a *right use* of other additional Indications, and Presages also. Whether they belong to the Moral, Natural, or Political World, or (if any such should be afforded) to the more peculiar Sphere of extraordinary and immediate Divine Revelation.

1. It is not only innocent, but commendable to endeavour the making a due improvement of *Moral Prognosticks*; or to consider what we are to *hope*, or *fear*, from the increase and growth of *Virtue*, or *Vice* in the time wherein we live. And herein we may fitly

L guide

guide our estimate, by what we find Promised, or Threatned, or Historically Recorded, in the Holy Scriptures (or other certain History) in reference to like Cases. Only because God may sometimes, Arbitrarily, vary his Methods, and the *express Application* of such Promises, Threatnings, and Histories to our times is not in Scripture, we should not be too positive in making it.

2. The like may be said of such unusual *Phænomena* as fall out within the *Sphere*, but besides the common course of *Nature*. As *Comets*, or whatever else, is wont to be reckon'd Portentous. The Total neglect of which things, I conceive, neither agrees with the Religious Reverence which we owe to the Ruler of the World; nor with  
com-



common Reason and Prudence.

It belongs not to the present Design, *as to Comets particularly*, to discourse the *Philosophy* of them. *Their relation to our Earth, as Meteors raised from it*, is a fancy that seems deservedly exploded ; But it seems to require great hardiness to deny they have any relation *as tokens*. *Their distance from us* may well argue the former. But, the constant Luminaries of Heaven, that in other kinds, continually serve us, might *by their distance* (most of them) be thought quite unrelated to us as well as *they*. And if we should suppose *All*, or *Most*, of those *usual Luminaries* primarily made for some other nobler use, that makes not the constant benefit we have by them *less in it self*. The like may be thought of the

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use

use which *these* more extraordinary ones may be of to us, in a divers kind. That they should *cause* what they are thought to *signifie*. I understand not, nor am solicitous how they are themselves *caused*; let that be as *Naturally* as can be supposed (of the rejected *Effluvia* of other Heavenly Bodies, or by the never so regular Collection of whatsoever other Celestial Matter) that hinders not *their being signs to us*, more than the *Natural causation* of the Bow in the Clouds, though *that*, being an appropriate Sign, for a determinate Purpose, its signification cannot but be more certain. And, if we should *erre* in supposing them to *signifie* any thing of future Event to us, at all, and *that Error* only lead us into more seriousness; and a more prepared temper of Mind, for such trouble

trouble as may be upon the Earth ; it will, sure, be a less dangerous Error, than *that* on the other hand would be, *if we should erre* in thinking them to signifie nothing ; and be thereby made the more suspise and secure, and more liable to be surpriz'd by the Calamities that shall ensue ; Besides, that we shall be the less excusable, in departing from the Judgment of all former Times and Ages, upon no certainty of being more in the right. And why should we think *such things* should serve us for no other purpose, than only to gratifie our curiosity, or furnish us with matter of wonder, invite us to gaze and admire ? When ( as an Ancient well observes )

*Things known to all in the common course of Nature are not less wonderful, and would be amazing to all that consider them, if Men were not wont*

August. de  
Civ. Dei,  
l. 21. c. 8.

to admire only things that are rare.

It is neither fit, indeed, we should be very particular, or confident, in our interpretations, and expectations upon such occasions; or let our Minds run out in exorbitant emotions (as will be further shewn in the positive account which is intended of this sort of Distemper.) But I conceive it is very safe to suppose, that some very considerable thing, either in a way of Judgment, or Mercy may ensue; according as the cry of *persevering wickedness* or of *penitential Prayer* is more or less loud at that time.

3. There are, again, very strange and extraordinary Aspects of Providence that sometimes offer themselves to our notice, in  
the

*the course of humane Affairs, and in the Political World, where God presides over Rational and free Agents. And these also must be allowed to have their Signification of what is likely to be Future. For, otherwise, if we were to reckon they imported nothing, either of Good, or Evil ( so much as Probable ) to be expected from them ; we should be to blame, if our Minds should admit any Impression from them, either of Hope, or Fear ( which both refer to the Future ) though in never so moderate a Degree. And should be Obligated to put on an absolute Stoicism, in reference to whatsoever may occur beyond what humane Nature is capable of ; and which would have more in it of Stupidity, than Prudence, or any Humane, or Christian Vertue.*

When, therefore, *the face of Providence* seems more manifestly threatening; Clouds gather, all things conspire to infer a common Calamity, and all Means and Methods of Prevention, are from time, to time, frustrated. If we, so far, allow our selves to think it approaching, as that we are hereby excited to Prayer, Repentance, and the reforming our Lives; This sure is better than a regardsles drowsie slumber.

And again, if, in order to our Preservation from a present utter ruine, there fall out, in a continual Succession, many strange and *wonderful Things which we looked not for*, without which we had been *swallowed up quick*; we be hereupon encouraged unto trust, and dependence

pendance upon God, and the hope we shall be preserved from being at length quite destroyed whatever present Calamities may befall us; and be the more fortify'd in our resolution not to forsake him, whatsoever shall. This seems no immodest or irrational construction and use of such Providences.

Yea, and at any time, when there is no very extraordinary appearance of a Divine hand in the conduct of Affairs; it unbecomes us not to use our Reason, and Prudence, in judging by their visible Posture, and tendency, as they lie under Humane management, what is like to ensue; upon supposition the over-ruling Providence do not interpose, to hinder, or alter their course: (As we find they often

(run

run on long, in one current, without any such more remarkable Interposition) only we are to be very wary, lest we be peremptory in concluding; or put more value than is meet upon our own judgment (as was noted before) both because we know not when, or how, a Divine hand may interpose; and may be ignorant of many matters of Fact, upon which a true judgment of their *Natural tendency* may depend, and our *ability to Judge*, upon what is in view, may be short and defective. Others that have more *power*, and *can do more*, may also have much *more Prudence*, and can discern better. But observing such limitations, 'tis fit we should use, to this purpose, that measure of Understanding which God hath given us. In what part of the  
World



World soever he assigns us our Station, we are to consider he hath made us reasonable Creatures, and that we owe to him *what interest we have*, in the Countrey where we live. And therefore, as we are not to affect the knowledge which belongs not to us; So, nor are we to renounce the knowledge which we have; to abandon our eyes, and be led on as *Brutes* or *Blind-men*. But to endeavour, according as we have opportunity, to see where we are, and whither we are going; that we may know accordingly how to govern our Spirits; and aim to get a temper of mind suitable to what may be the State of our Case. And for ought we know, this may be all the Prophecy we shall have to guide us. As it was the celebrated saying of a  
Greek

Greek Poet, quoted by divers of the Sager Heathens, *He is the best Prophet that conjectures best.* Nor is it so reasonable to expect, that in plain cases ( which do ordinarily happen ) God should, by any extraordinary means, give us notice of what is to fall out.

4. But we are not, suddenly, to reject any premonitions of that kind, that appear to deserve our regard, if there be any such. 'Tis indeed a part of Prudence not too hastily to embrace, or lay much stresse upon modern Prophécies. But I see not how it can be concluded, that, because God hath, of latter time, been more sparing, as to such communications; that therefore Prophecy is so absolutely ceas'd, that he will, never more, give men intimations of his mind and purposes

ses that way. He hath never said it. Nor can it be known by ordinary means. Therefore for any to say it, were to pretend to Prophecy, even while they say Prophecy is ceas'd.

The Superstition of the vulgar Pagans was, indeed, greatly impos'd upon by the pretence of Divination; but among their more ancient *Philosophers* none ever deny'd the thing, except *Xenophanes* and *Epicurus*, as *Cicero* † and *Plutarch* \* inform us, and concerning the latter, *Laertius* †. It seems he did it over, and over; and, indeed, it well agreed with his Principles about the Deity to do so. *Cicero* himself, after large Discourse upon the Subject, leaves at last, the matter doubtful according to the manner of the *Accademy*, which he

† De divi-  
nat.

\* De Pla-  
cit. Phil.

† *μηνύμενος*  
*δὲ ἀποσυν*  
*ἐν ἄλλοις*  
*ἀναστρεφεί,*  
*ὡς καὶ ἐν τῇ*  
*μικρᾷ ὁμιλίᾳ.* In  
vitâ Epic.

August. De  
Civ. Dei.  
l. 5. c. 9.

he professes to imitate. Yet great Father in the Christian Church, understands him to deny it, but, withal observes that he deny'd *Gods prescience too* ( as one might, indeed that he doubted it at least ) in that Discourse.

Plato discourses soberly of it, asserting, and diminishing it, at once, ( as we shall afterwards have more occasion to note ) The generality were for it, as is evident. And indeed the many *Monitory Dreams* related in *Cicero's Books*, upon that Subject, and by *Plutarch* in several parts of his works, shew that *notices of things to come* were not uncommon, among the Pagans; and in a way that seem'd more remarkable, and of more certain signification, than their so much boasted *Oracles*. How they came

came by them, from whom, or upon what account, we do not now enquire. But since the matter was really *so*, it seems no incredible thing, that *some* or *other*, in the Christian Church, even in these latter ages, should, upon better terms, partake somewhat of some such a privilege. Nor is it difficult to produce many instances, within the latter Centuries, that would encline one to think it hath been so.

*Savanrola,  
G. Wif-  
chard, of  
Scotland,  
and several  
others.*

But whosoever shall pretend it, I see not what right they can claim to be believed by others, till the event justifie the Prediction. Unless they can, *otherwise*, shew the signs which are wont to accompany, and recommend a *supernatural* revelation.

Where

Where *any such* is really afforded, 'tis like it may produce a concomitant confidence, that will exclude all present doubt in *their own minds*, without external confirmation. But then, as the Apostle speaks in another case, *if they have faith, they must have it to themselves*. They can never describe their confidence to another, so as to distinguish it from the impression of a meer groundles ( and often deluded ) imagination.

Nor are others to grudge at it, if some, *particular persons*, be, in in this or that instance privileged with so peculiar a divine favour, as to have *secret Monitions* of any danger approaching them, that they may avoid it, or *direction* concerning their own private affairs,

affairs, which none else are concern'd to take cognisance of. But, if the matter be of common concernment, the concurrence of things is to be noted; and a greater regard will seem to be challenged, if several of these mentioned indications do fall in together.

As, supposing a gradual foregoing languor, and degeneracy of Religion, in the several parts of the *Christian World*. And Christianity ( with the several professions, which it comprehends ) looks lesse like a Religion; or a thing that hath any reference to God. But rather, that men have thought fit to make use of this or that various mode of it, as a mark of civil distinction, under which to form and unite themselves into opposite parties, for the serving of secular interests and  
M designs.

*designs.* It, generally, makes no better men than *Paganism*. A Spirit of *Atheism*, profaneness, and contempt of the *Deity*, and of *all things sacred*, more openly shews and avows it self, than perhaps, heretofore, in any *Pagan Nation*. And not in a time of *grosse darknes*, such as formerly, for several ages, had spread it self over the whole face of the *Christian Church*; but in a time of very clear and bright light. Worse and more *horrid Principles*, even in the ancient sense of mankind, apparently destructive of *common order*, and of all humane Society, are inserted into the *Religion of Christians*; and obtain with them that have, in great part, obtained the power in the *Christian World*, and would wholly ingrosse the *Christian name*. Better Principles, in others, are *inefficacious* and signifie nothing



nothing, too generally, to the governing of their lives and practice. Men are let loose to all imaginable wickednes, as much as if they were not *Christians*, and many ( viz. that more vastly numerous and bulky party ) *the more* for that they are so. Yea, and not *let loose*, only ; but *obliged*, by their very principles, to those peculiar acts, and kinds of Wickednes, and violence, which directly tend to turn *Christendome* into an *Aceldama*, and involve the *Christian World* in ruine and confusion. When *multitudes* stand, as it were, prepared, and in a ready posture, to execute such vengeance, as is highly deserved *by others*, and make Judgment begin at ( that which our Profession obliges us rather to account ) the *house of God* ( to rebound afterward, with greater terror and

destructiveness upon themselves who began it.)

If now some eminent Servant of God, much noted, and of great remark, for *Knowledge, Wisdom, and Sanctity*, remote from all suspicion of levity, or sinister design, shall have very expressly foretold *such a time and State of things* as this, and what will be consequent thereupon; and with great earnestness and vehemency inculcated the premonition. And if, in such a time, God shall set again and again a *monitory Torch, high and flaming in the Heavens over our heads*; Methinks it doth not *favour well* to make light account of it, or think it signifies nothing.

For (to *speak* indeed, as himself doth allow and teach us to

conceive.) The Majesty of God doth in such concurrent appearances seem more August. His hand is lift up, and he doth as it were *accingere se*, prepare, and addresse himself to action, raise himself up in his holy habitation, Zech. 2. 13. whereupon, all flesh is required to be [silent before him.] A posture both of reverence, in respect of what he hath already done; and of expectation, as to what he may further be about to do.

And of what import or signification soever, such things, in their concurrence, may be to us, it surely ought to be attended to, and received with great seriousness, yea, and with thankfulness. Especially, if there be ground to hope well concerning the issue (as there will alwaies be to them that fear God)

and we can see the better, what special sort, and kind of duty, we are, more peculiarly, to apply our selves to, in the mean time.

And whereas we know a *Mind* and *Wisdom*, governs all affairs and events through the whole universe. It is fit we should meet *Mind* with *Mind*, *Wisdom* with *Wisdom*. That, on our part, an obsequious, docile mind should advert to, and wait upon that *Supream, all-ruling, divine mind*, in all the appearances, wherein it looks forth upon us. And, with a dutiful veneration, cry hail to every radiation of that holy light. Accounting, whatever it imports, it opportunely visits the darknes wherein we converse, and should be as gratefully received as the *Sun*, peeping through a *Cloud*, by one travelling in a dusky day.

day. *His* is the teaching *Wisdom*. It is well for us if we can be *Wise* enough to learn; And unto that, there is a *Wisdom* requisite also, *Who* so is wise, and will observe those things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord. And again, I will instruct thee, and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go; I will guide thee with mine eye; which implies our eye must diligently mark his, and that ( as it follows ) we be not as the Horse or Mule that have no understanding, &c.

*Psal.* 107.  
ult.

*Psal.* 32.8.

Verse 9.

And whereas, all the works of God, even those that are of every daies observation, do some way or other represent God to us; and should constantly suggest unto us serious thoughts of him; Those that are more extraordinary, ought the more deeply to impress our minds.

And excite in us those higher acts of a Religious affection, which the circumstances of our present State admit not that they can be constant in the same degree. As though Subjects ought *alwaies* to bear a *loyal mind* towards their Prince upon such greater occasions, when he shews himself in *solemn state*, 'tis becoming there be correspondent acts of more *solemn homage*.

But upon the whole, since all the *certain knowledge* we can have of such futurities as *naturally*, and in themselves are not certain, must be by *Gods own revelation* only; and all *probable preapprehension* of them, by the use of our own *reason* and *prudence*, upon any other *apt Media* that occur to us. While we can confine our desire of seeing into  
the

*the future within these limits, it will be just and innocent. And therefore we may now go on.*

II. *To the positive discovery where- in this appetite is inordinate and degenerates into a distemper of mind.*

And it may, in general, be collected from what hath been now said, viz. that when we remain unsatisfied, with *what God is pleased to reveal* about such things; and with *what a well govern'd prudence*, can any other way discern; and have an itch and hankering of mind, after other prognosticks, that lye not within this compas, and are no proper objects either for our Faith or our Reason. This is the distemper we are to get redrest, and are concern'd to take heed lest we indulge or cherish.

And

And that we may yet be *some-  
what more distinct* in making this  
discovery. *These that follow*, will  
be plain indications, that our *inqui-  
sitiveness* and *thirst after the know-  
ledge of future things* is a distem-  
per of mind, and ought to be con-  
sidered, and dealt with according-  
ly. As,

1. *If it be accompanied with discon-  
tent*, and a fastidious loathing of  
our present Lot and portion in the  
World. Which is so much the  
worse if when our affectation and  
desire of change, proceeds *really*,  
and at the bottom from *private self-  
respect*; we endeavour to delude  
others, or flatter our selves into  
a belief that 'tis only the *publick  
good* we are intent upon, and the  
better state of Gods interest in  
the



the World. And worst of all, if our desires be turbulent, vindictive, and bloody, i. e. If not only they are so fervent towards our own hoped advantages, that we care not through what publick confusions, and calamities our private ends be promoted and carryed on; but should like it the better to see at the same time our hearts desire upon them we have allowed our selves to hate; yea, though it be never so true that they hate us, and have been injurious to us. Thus with the Study and desire of a new State of things, which in it self may be, in some cases, Innocent; and, limited to due Methods and Degrees of the desired Change, not only innocent but a duty (for there is no State of things in this World so good, but being still imperfectly so, we ought to desire

desire it were better ) a two-fold vicious Appetite may fall in, that of *Avarice*, and *Revenge*, of good to our selves beyond what comes to our share ; and of hurt to other Men. Which complicated *Disease* must taint and infect every *Thought*, and *Look* that is directed forward towards a better state of things.

If this be the case, it must be great negligence and indulgence to our selves not to discern it. For the incoherence and ill agreement of what is *real*, and what is *pretended* would soon appear to one not willing to be mistaken. Sincere devotedness to God and his Interest, would be alwayes most conjunct with that complacential Faith in his *Governing Wisdom* and *Power*, and entire resignation of our selves and all his  
and

and *our own* concerns to his *pleasure* and *goodnes*, that we will never think his procedure *too slow*; or suspect him of neglecting *his own Interest*; or of that which *he judges* ( and which therefore is, most truly ) ours. And it is ever accompany'd with that *placid B benignity*, and *universal Love* to other Men ( Enemies themselves being by the known Rules of the Gospel included ) as that we would not wish their *least injury*, for our own *greatest advantage*. And should most earnestly wish, that, if God see good, the *advantage* of *his Interest* in the World, might be so carry'd on as to comprehend and take in therewith, *their greatest Advantage* also. And if we should see cause to apprehend it may fall out to be otherwise. That, surely, ought to be

Jerem.  
16.

be our temper, which the Prophet expresses ( and appeals to God concerning it ) upon a very frightful prospect of things [ I have not desired the woful day O Lord thou knowest ] So remote it should be from us to press forward with a ravenous, cruel Eye towards a Tragical bloody Scene. Or to accuse the Divine patience which we should adore, and ( perhaps, as much as any others ) do also need.

2. *If there be a greater inclination to look forward into the future things of Time than those of Eternity.* If in the former we find a Con-naturalnes, and they seem most agreeable to us. These other are Tasteless, and without Sap and Savour. If it would be a great and sensible Consolation, to be assured,  
such

such a state of things as we would  
 chuse, shall very shortly obtain.  
 But to think of a State approaching,  
 wherein all things shall be per-  
 fectly and unexceptionably well for ever,  
 is but cold comfort. Blessed  
 God! What a mortal Token is  
 this? Do we apprehend nothing  
 of Distemper in it? Do we see  
 our selves the *Men of Time* ( as  
 the *Hebrew* expresses what we  
 read *Men of this World* ) and do Psal. 17. 14  
 not our Hearts misgive at the  
 thought? How little likely is it  
 we are design'd for that Blessed  
 Eternity to which our Spirits  
 are so little suitable? When, as  
 'tis said of them that are for the  
 State wherein Mortality shall be 2 cor. 5.  
 swallowed up of Life, that He that 4. 5.  
 hath wrought them for that self same  
 thing is God? Can the felicity  
 of Heaven belong to them that  
 value

value it not as their *best* good? but count a *Terrestrial Paradise* of their own devising better?

3. *If we be so intent upon this or that future Event, as that hereby the due impression is worn off, of much greater and more important things that are already past. What so great things have we to expect in our time, as we know have come to pass in former Time? What so great, as that the Son of God came down into our World! Did put on Man! Liv'd a Lives-time among us Mortals! Breath'd every where heavenly Love, and Grace, and Sweetnes; and with these grateful Odours perfum'd this noysome impure, forlorn, Region of Darkness and Death! Dy'd a Sacrifice for Sinners! And overcame Death! Ascended in Triumph*

Triumph to the Throne of God,  
sate down on the right hand of  
the Majesty on high! What so <sup>1 Tim. 3.</sup>  
great as the mysterie of Godlines, that <sup>16.</sup>  
God was manifested in the flesh, justifi-  
fy'd in the Spirit, seen of Angels, Preach-  
ed unto the Gentiles, believed on in  
the World, received up into Glory!  
Are any of those little futurities;  
whereof we have but an uncertain  
expectation, fit to be compared with  
these things which we certainly know  
to have come to passe? Or have we  
any thing so important, and great  
to fix our eye upon, as a Redeem-  
er now in his exaltation? Invested  
with all Power in Heaven and Earth,  
to whom every knee must bow, and  
every tongue confesse! The Arbit-  
er of Life and Death to men! who  
hath establisht so admirable a  
frame of Religion for the reducti-

N

on

on of Apostate man ! made it triumph over the obstinate infidelity of the Jews, and the Idolatry of the Gentile World ! And what the glorious issue of his Administration will be, we *already know* ; and are not left about it to suspensefull dubious enquiry. Nor do need a more certain Revelation than we have. Is all this to be wav'd and overlook'd ? while we stand at a gaze, expecting what shall be the height of the *French Monarchy*, or the fate of the *Dutch Republick*, or of this or that particular person, now upon the Stage ! It must surely be an ill Symptom, and an indication of a sickly mind, when things have all their value and regard with us, not as they are *great*, but as they are *new*. And are only considerable



ble to us, because they are yet future and unknown:

4. If we more earnestly covet to foreknow the approach of an external State of things that would be better, in our account, than to feel the good effect upon our Spirits, of One that we take to be worse, and that is externally afflictive to us. This excludes the apprehension of a wise Providence, governing the World; That pursues a design in what it doth or permits. As if we thought God did afflict us for afflictions sake, as more intending, therein, his own pleasure than our profit. Or as if we would impute a levity to Providence, and reckon'd it inconstant, and desultory, even beneath the ordinary Prudence of a man. That it might forget and

1 Sam. 3.  
12.

desist, and would not drive on a design to an issue. Or that (contrary to what God tells *Eli* by *Samuel*) *when he began*, he would divert and alter his *course*, *before he made an end*. Or it implies, we place our felicity in somewhat *without us*, more than in a good habit and temper of Spirit *within*. Whereas, surely things are much amiss with us, if we do not account that a *mortify'd Heart*, *towards whatsoever is temporary and terrene*, is a thousandfold more desirable than the best external State of things that is ever to be enjoy'd under the Sun. As calamitous as the condition of *Job* was, it had been a worse evil than any he suffered; If that censure of him were true, *that he chose iniquity rather than affliction*. Or if that  
were

were not true, which he seems to intimate concerning himself, that he was lesse intent upon a present release from the Furnace, than, at length to come out like *Job. 23. 10.* Gold.

5. If the other parts of Scripture be lesse savoury to us than the Prophetical. And especially when these are of more grateful Savour than the preceptive part. This is of great affinity with the foregoing Character. For the precepts in Gods Word, describe to us that excellent frame of Spirit, which Afflictions are design'd (as one sort of means) more deeply to impresse. And what there is of ill Character, here, lies in this, when any thing is of greater value than that comely, amiable, well complexion'd tem-

per of Spirit. And surely it lesse concerns us, *What God will do with-  
out us*, than, *what he will have us  
do, and be, our selves*. It is an ill  
circumstance with a diseased per-  
son, when he hath lesse inclina-  
tion to such things as tends to  
bring him to a confirmed habit of  
health, than such as more serve to  
nourish his Disease. And whereas  
*Quicquid recipitur — ad modum re-  
cipientis*, There is little doubt, but,  
where this distemper, we are  
speaking of, prevails; men may  
be much inclined to make that  
use, *even of Scripture Prophecies*  
as to feed their distemper. When  
they can relish and allow them-  
selves to mind no other parts of  
the Bible. When they take more  
pleasure to be conversant in *these*  
*obscurer things*, than those that  
are

are *plain*, and concern us more, ( as God hath mercifully provided that such things, in his Word, should be plainest, that are of greatest concernment to us, ) And they perhaps, neither have the requisite helps, nor the ability, with them to master the obscurity. When our prepossest Fancy must be the Interpreter. And we will make the Prophecy speak what it never meant. Draw it down to the little particularities of the time and place wherein we live. And are peremptory in our applications, and so confident, till we find our selves mistaken, that, when we do, we begin to suspect the Bible. As if Divine truths, and our attachments to them, must stand and fall together.

N 4

6. And

6. (And lastly) *When we have an undue regard to unscriptural Prophecies. Which we may be supposed to have, if we either much search after them; or give hasty credit to them without search.*

1. *If we much search after them.*  
 As, weak and sickly Appetites are wont to do for rarities and novelties, we are not content with what occurs, nor with our own allotment, and Gods ordinary dispensation, if things of that kind occur not, but purvey, and listen out after them. As if we had not considerable things enough, both for our employment, and our entertainment and gratification besides.

2. *If*

2. If we believe them without search; only because they seem to speak according to our Mind. Imbibe all things, of that import, promiscuously and ~~on~~ the sudden, without examining the matter.

The Simple believeth every word. Prov. 14<sup>i</sup>  
15.

'Tis the business of judgment, to distinguish and discern. We therefore call it discretion. It totally fails, when we can find no Medium, between believing every thing, and nothing. Some things indeed of this pretence, are so apparently idle, and ridiculous, that it will become a Prudent Man to reject them at the first sight. Some may perhaps, partly from the Matter, or partly from the Person, and other concurring circumstances.

cumstances, have such an appearance, as ought to stay our Minds upon them, detain us a while, and hold us in some suspense, while we consider and examine whether any further regard is to be given them or no.

'Tis a very distemper'd, ravenous Appetite, that swallowes all it can catch *without choice*; that allows no leasure to distinguish between what is suitable, or fit for nourishment, and what is either noxious, or vain.

II. *And now for the Cure of this Distemper.* We are to consider the Nature of the things the Fore-knowledge whereof we so earnestly affect. And we find they are not such futurities as have their certain Causes



Causes in Nature. As when the Sun will rise and set ; or be nearer us or remoter ; when there will be an Eclipse, &c. These are not the things which will satisfy this Appetite. But meer contingencies that depend upon free and arbitrary Causes, *i. e.* especially, upon the Mind and Will of Man ; as it is under the direction of the Supreme, and all-governing Mind. And again, we are to consider the Nature of the Knowledge we covet, of these things, *viz.* that it is not *conjectural* ( which indeed were not Knowledge ) but we would be at a certainty about them.

Now hereupon we are further to consider, that there is no reasonable

*sonable Appetite* which we may not seek to have gratify'd in some apt and proper way, *i. e.* By means that are both *lawful*, and *likely* to attain our end.

In the present case, we can think of *no course* to be taken for the obtaining of *this Knowledge* (even giving the greatest scope and latitude to our Thoughts) but it must suppose one of these two things; *Either* that we look upon it as an *ordinary gift* to be acquir'd by our own endeavours *i. e.* by Art and Industry, and the use of Natural Means and helps, whereby we imagine *our Natures* may be heightn'd, and improved to this pitch. *Or else* that we reckon it an *extraordinary immediate gift*

gift of God; so that if we affect it, we have no course to take but to seek it at his hands by Prayer; either that God would confer it upon our selves, or upon some others, by whom we may be inform'd.

And we are now to bethink our selves, what *encouragement* or *allowance* we can suppose is given us to seek it either of these wayes. For, if we can seek it in neither of these, we must be oblig'd either to Assign a *Third* ( as we never can ) or abandon it as an unreasonable, and vicious Appetite; the satisfaction whereof is no way to be so much as attempted, or sought after. And now

1. As to the former of these wayes

*ways.* There is nothing more to be despair'd of, The very attempt being both *foolish*, and *impious*; Both most *impossible*, and *unlawful*.

1. 'Tis plainly an *impossible attempt*. For what Natural means, what rules of Art, can give us the Knowledge of *such futurities* as we are speaking of? or improve our *natural faculties* to it? 'Tis a Knowledge quite of another kind, and Alien to our Natures. For besides the notices we have of things *by sense*, which is limited wholly to *things present*, as it's Object, and our Knowledge of *First*, and *self-evident Principles* (from which how remote are the *future contingencies* we now speak of?) We have no imaginable

ginable way of coming by the Knowledge of any thing, otherwise than by reasoning and discourse, which supposes a *natural Connection* of things. Whereupon, when we have sure hold of one end of the Thred, we can proceed by it, and lead our selves on, by such things as we know to other things we know not. But what *such natural Connection* is there, between *any present thing*, known to us, and *this sort* of future things? Which, for the most part, are such as must be brought about, by the concurrence of great Multitudes of *free Agents*, who may be opposed by as great, and prevented 'of accomplishing what they design'd, though their Minds were never so constantly intent upon the design. But we have

no

no way to know *with certainty* the *present Minds* of so many Men, nor of any Man at all, by immediate inspection; or otherwise, than as we may collect, by the former series of his actions or professions. Wherein Men may deceive the most quick-sighted, and really *intend otherwise*, that they *seem*. Much less do we know that so mutable a thing as the Mind of Man is, will not alter, and especially, of so many Men. And their condition and outward circumstances may alter, if not their Minds. What can be certain in such a Region of changes, where the effecting of purposes depends upon the Body, as well as the Mind, and many external aids and helps besides? And  
where

where all are subject to so many Accidents, to Maimes, Sicknesses, and Deaths? Nay who can tell what *his own mind* shall be hereafter, supposing any such futurity to be within his own Power, or that his Power shall be the same, if his mind should not change. And adde, what is more then all the rest, *who knoweth the mind of God, or being his Counsellor hath taught him?* Who can tell what he will do? Or enable, or permit men to do? What event could ever have been thought more certain, beforehand, than the destruction of the Jews by *Hamans* means? And who could ever have foreseen a few days, or hours before, that he should be hanged on the Gallows he prepared for *Mordecai*. Who can ever think or hope, to measure that boundless range, and latitude,

O

Isa. 40.

Rom. 11.

*titude*, wherein infinite Wisdom and Power may work this way or that? Or, within that vast and immense *Scope*; who can be able to predict what way God will take? Or what he will do, or not do? When all humane contrivance and forecast is at an end, still more ways lye open to him. Or his Power can make more, and break its way through whatsoever obstructions. *We know not*  
 2 Chron. 20. *what to do* (says *Jehoshaphat* in his distress) *but our eyes are upon thee.* A dutiful confession of the *limitedness* of humane Wit, and Power, and of the unlimitedness of the *Divine*, both at once! To offer at comprehending his profound designs, and abstruse methods only shews how little we understand our selves, or him. Our own *scant measure*, or his *immensity*. We  
 might



might better attempt to Sound the Ocean with our finger, or gather it into the hollow of our hand. It were happy for us, if our confessed ignorance might end in Adoration ; And that the sense of our hearts were such as the Apostles words would aptly express. Rom. 11. 33. *O the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his Judgements, and his ways past finding out.* Such as affect to be wiser, but not so pious, and go about to form Models, and Ideas for the future, apart from him ; how often doth their great Wit only serve to expose their Folly ! And make them the sport of Fortune (as some would call it) we may say rather, of that *Wise and Righteous Providence*, that delights to triumph over baffled insolence !

(for *ludit in humanis*, &c.) and deride a confidence that is founded only in proud impotency! *He that sits in the Heavens laughs the most High bath them in derision.* How often are the wisest Politicians disappointed and despised! All their measures broken! Their Models shatter'd and discompos'd! And all their Fabricks overturn'd in a moment! So remote is humane Wit, at the utmost stretch, from any certainty, about the *futureties* we speak of.

→ And if any imagine it may be help't to *foresee*, by *some art or other*; or by rules framed and collected upon former experience; according whereto Judgments are said heretofore to have been *happily* made, of what would come to passe.

It

It is not here intended to examine the several ways that have been taken, and trusted in, for this purpose : That they are all such as have been, and are, much disputed, if they were not with manifest evidence disprov'd, would argue the fore-knowledge of things not likely to be *very certain*, that must be had by *Arts*, and *Rules* that are themselves, *uncertain*.

How much hath been said (aniently, and of late) to discover the vanity of that sort of *Astrology* that relates to the *futurities* we have under consideration ! Such as have a mind may view what is written to that purpose, and may save themselves much vain labour by perusing the Learned *Dr. More's* late *Tetractys*, and what it

refers to in his *Mystery of Godliness*.

Have we heard of none of our later pretenders this way, that have incurred the like fate with that *Wise man of Greece*, that was laught at by a silly *Girl* (as *Lactantius* tells us) for so long gazing upon the Stars (though perhaps upon a better account) till at length, in his walk, he fell into a Ditch. That he minded so much what was over his *Head*, that he took no notice what was at his *Feet* !

And for the ancient *Augury* of the *Pagans*, in the several sorts of it, how much was it had in contempt by the *Wiser* among themselves. Infomuch that One of them says, *he wonder'd how they could*

could look upon One another, and not laugh. As who would not, that such strange things should be fore-shewn by the flying, or the singing, or the feeding of Birds!

Their usual *Haruspicy* was as *Wise*, and as much regarded by some greater minds among them. As *Alexander* that reprov'd and jeer'd the impertinency of his *Sooth-sayer* that would have withheld him from action, upon the pretence of some ill *Omen* he had observ'd in the intrals; telling him that he would surely think he were impertinent, and troublesome if he should go about to interrupt him in his employment, when he was busie viewing his sacrifice, and as'kt him, when he prest further, what greater impediment a man could have, that had great things before his eyes, than a dot-

Curt.

*ting superstitious Fortune teller ?*

And where there was not so much *Wisdom* and *Fortitude*, as to *despise* such fooleries, how ludicrous was it that great and momentous affairs were to be govern'd by them ! That a *General* was not to March an Army or fight a *Battel*, but first such observation must be had of the flight of Birds, and the intralls of Beasts ! Or other things, as idle as they, as the *Whirlings*, *Rollings*, and noise of *Rivers*, the change of the *Moon*, &c. Upon which in *Germany* (as is observ'd) when *Cesar* had invaded it, their *presaging Women* were to be consult- before it was thought fit to give him *Battel*. Besides, what was not less vain, but more horrid, pre- saging upon the convuls't members, and the flowing Blood, of a man slain for the purpose. Nay and the

Clem.  
Alexand.  
Strom.  
L. 1.

Diod.  
Sic. Bibl.  
Hist. l. 5.

the excess of this desire hath tempted some, to try the blacker practices of Necromancy, or what might be gained to *satisfie and please* it, by converse with *departed Souls*; or what if it be other familiar Spirits? We here consider the *Folly* of such courses, apart from the *Impiety*. As what reason have we upon which to apprehend, that they can *ascertain* us, or be, ordinarily, *certain themselves* of such futurities as we speak of? But also the thought of any such course *we are to presume is horrid* to the minds of serious Christians. Unto whom, what we find in the *Holy Scriptures*, concerning any such ways of presaging, as have been mentioned, should, methinks, be enough, to form their Spirits both to the *hatred*, and the *contempt* of them, and, by consequence, of the *principle*

Isa. 44.  
25.

c. 47. 13,  
14.

ciple it self (this vain appetite) that leads unto them, and hath captivated whole Nations into so miserable delusion by them. Thus saith the Lord thy Redeemer, that frustrateth the tokens of the Liars, and maketh Diviners mad, that turneth the wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish. Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy Counsels: Let now the Astrologers, the Star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold they shall be as stubble, the Fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the Flame, &c. (See also Isa. 8. 19, 20. Dan. 2. 27.

And though it be true that God hath often given premonitions of future things, by dream (which is a matter that belongs not to this head) yet the Rules that are given,  
by



by some Learned men, for the interpreting of such dreams as contain not the things expressly, pretended to be signified, are, generally, so very ridiculous, that 'tis hard to say, whether they were learnedly busie or idle, that thought fit to trouble themselves or the World with them.

Oneiro-  
crit. Ar-  
tem.  
Achmic.  
&c.

And surely, though some Dreams have been Divine; such Rules of interpreting any, are so meanly humane, as to be fit enough to be thrown in hither, and thrown away with the rest of the trash noted before. And may help to let us see, that the foreknowledge of the future things we are considering, is so impossible to humane nature, improved by whatsoever Rules and Precepts of our devising, that while men seek to become wise in this kind, by such means,

means, they do but befool themselves, and are not a whit the *more knowing*, but shew themselves the less prudent and sober.

And if such knowledge be a thing whereof humane nature, *by it self*, is not capable; To be impatient of ignorance *in these things*, is to be offended that God hath made us *such Creatures* as we find we are. That is, if this had been the *natural endowment* of some other order of *Creatures*, how unreasonable were it that a man should quarrel with *his own nature*, and with the inseparable circumstances of his own state? All *Creatures* are of limited natures to *one or other particular kind*. This or that *Creature* admits of all the perfections of *its own kind*. It admits not those of *another kind*. How foolish were it if a man should

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vex himself that he cannot fly like a Bird, or run like a Stag, or smell like a Hound, or cannot as an Angel fly, at pleasure, between Heaven and Earth, or visit the several Orbs, and exactly measure their Magnitudes and Distances from one another!

Secondly, We are therefore to consider that the affectation of such fore-knowledge (i. e. to have it *in* and *of* *our selves*, or by any means of our devising) is *unlawful* as well as *impossible*. Indeed this might be collected from the former. For the *capacity of our natures* ought to limit *our desires*. And it hence *also*, further appears unlawful upon the highest account, in that it were to aspire to what is most *peculiar*, and appropriate to the *Deity*. For hereby the great God demonstrates his *Godhead*, and expostu-

Isa. 41.

21, 22, 23

postulating with Idolaters, insults over the unactive ignorance of their impotent and inanimate Deities upon this account. Produce your cause (saith he) bring forth your strong reasons. Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen. Shew the things that are to come hereafter that we may know that ye are Gods. q. d, If they be Gods why do they not, as Gods predict things to come, that if they be Gods we may know it? So in the 42 of the same Prophecy, ver. 8, 9. I am the Lord, that is my Name, and my Glory will I not give to another, neither my Praise to graven Images. Behold the former things are to come to passe, and new things do I declare: Before they spring forth I tell you of them. This is a thing (saith he) that doth peculiarly belong to me. It is a Glory of mine that shall never be im-

imparted. And to the same sense is that in the 46 of that Prophecy, 9, 10. Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is none else, I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying; my Counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure. So also did our Blessed Saviour, when he had a mind to convince that he was, as he gave out, the Son of God, design the same medium for that purpose. Now I tell you before it come, that <sup>John 13. 19.</sup> when it is come to passe, ye may believe that I am he. And again, I have <sup>Ch. 14. 29.</sup> told you before it come to passe, that when it is come to passe, ye might believe.

It was indeed the great Temptation used to our unhappy first Parents; You shall be as Gods, knowing good

good and evil. Undoubtedly *that knowledge* wherewith they were tempted, must include at least, *foreknowledge* in it. You shall be as Gods knowing &c. They were tempted by an expectation of being, in this respect, *made like God*, and we are become by it, in this respect, *like Beasts that perish*, and in other respects, like the *Devils themselves*, who joy in our deception and perdition. Too like *Beasts in ignorance*, and *Devils in Malignity*!

What can be a more presumptuous arrogance than to aim at the *royalties of the Godhead*! If to affect what belongs to the nature and capacity of another Creature were *foolish*; to aspire to any prerogative, and peculiarity of *God himself*, cannot but be *extreamly impious and wicked*! Are we to be offended that we are *Creatures*? that

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our natures and the capacity of our understandings are not unlimited, and all comprehending, when we owe it to the meer benignity and good pleasure of our maker, that we are *any thing*? and *much more*, that we have any such thing as an *understanding* at all?

Yea, and if *this knowledge* were not peculiar to God, yet inasmuch as he hath not given it us, nor appointed us any means of attaining it, 'tis an *uncreaturely disposition*, not to be satisfi'd without it. The rebuke *our Saviour* gave his Disciples in one particular case of this nature, ought also to be monitory to us, in all such cases, i.e. When they enquire *wilt thou at this time restore* Acts 1. 6. *again the Kingdom to Israel*? His answer is reprehensive. *It is not for* ver. 7. *you to know the Times or the Seasons which the Father hath put in his own*

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Pow.

Y<sup>th</sup> 270.

*Power.* The expression is remarkable [*which the Father hath put in his own power*] it implies, as if, by a positive act, God had reserv'd, and lockt up from us, the things which he hath not vouchsaf't to reveal. And we may see how he hath, as it were *industriously*, drawn a curtain between the *present* and *future time*, that we cannot see so far as one moment before us. Shall we with rude and irreverent hands, as it were attempt to rend, or draw aside the curtain?

2dly. And from hence we may also see, in the next place how little encouragement we have *in the other way* to expect this knowledg, viz. by *supplicating God for it*, as an extraordinary gift to be obtain'd immediately from him. If we have not *Wisdom* enough, to present unto him *reasonable desires*, we may expect *his wisdom* will



will deny us such as are *unreasonable*. He is never so apt to dislike our requests for their being *too great*, as *too little*. Or for their having nothing valuable, or important in them, nothing suitable to him, or to us, fit for him to give, or for us to seek or receive. In the present case, 'tis true, he hath sometimes favoured men with this kind of knowledge, *ordained* and *inspired* Prophets, who were to signify his purposes and pleasure to others. But it was rather *modestly* declin'd, then *sought*; and was, mostly, upon great and important occasions for high and very considerable ends, and to be effected, at seasons, and by persons of his own choosing.

Nor doth it seem a thing fit for men to make the matter of *Petition*. For if they should, either it must be for some reason *peculiar to themselves*,

*selves*, and which others cannot generally alledge, as well as they; which it is not supposable any can be able to assign. Or for some common reason, that concerns the generality of men as much. And then, we are sure, it can be of no weight; for, upon the same reason, all should, as much, be Prophets. Which it is plain he doth not judge fit (who can best judge) in that he hath not made them so. And that this is a Communication not fit to be *constant*, and *general*, at *all times*, & to *all persons*, is evident in it self. And may appear by divers considerations that partly respect God, and his Government, partly our selves, and our own interest, and concernment.

1. *On Gods part*. It would greatly detract from the *Majesty of his Government* that it should have no  
*Arcana,*

*Arcana*, and that all things should lye open to every eye. We may easily apprehend that the dignity of the Divine Government was, *in this respect*, design'd to be kept up to an awful height, when we find there is somewhat mentioned to us (and how many things more may there be that are not mentioned?) which the *Angels in heaven know not*, nor the humane soul of our Lord himself, but the Father only.

Nor again, was it suitable (particularly) to the Government of God over man, in this present state, which we find design'd for a state of probation; to be concluded, and shut up at last by a solemn judgment. For unto this state, the final judgment hath its peculiar, only reference.

Therein we are to receive [the <sup>2 Cor. 5. 10.</sup> things done in the body] i.e., (as 'tis explain'd) according to what we have

done whether good or evil. How unfit were it that *Probationers for Eternity*, should, generally, foreknow events that shall fall out in the state of their Tryal? Wherein they are to be strictly ty'd up to rules without regard to *Events*. And are to approve themselves in that sincerity, constancy, fortitude, dependance upon God, resignation of themselves, and their concerns to him, that could have little place or opportunity to shew themselves, in a state wherein all things were at a certainty to them.

2. *On our own part*. It is to be considered that the foreknowledge of temporary Events, is not a thing of that value to us, which we may, perhaps, imagine it is. It would serve us more for Curiosity than Use. An unfit thing for us to Petition in, or expect to be gratifi'd. The wiser Heathens have thought meanly of it.

it. They have believed, indeed, that God did sometimes enable men to Prophesie but have reckon'd it, as One of them speaks, a gift indulg'd unto humane imprudence. That Authour accounts weaker minds, the usual subjects of it. That no man in his right mind, attain'd it, but either being alienated from himself, by sleep or a Disease. And that they were not wont to understand, *themselves*, the meaning of their own visions, but must have them interpreted by others. The result of a larger discourse, he hath about it, than is fit here to be inserted comes to this, that *fools Divine and wise must judge*. Whereupon another thinks such Prophecies little to be regarded, counting it strange that what a wise man could not see a mad man should. And that when one hath lost humane sense he should obtain Divine!

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Tim.  
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Cicero.

They were not acquainted indeed with those ways wherein God revealed his mind to *Holy men* whom he used as his own *Amanuenses*, or *Penmen*, or who were otherwise to serve him, for sacred purposes. But when we consider *Balaams* being a Prophet, methinks we should not be over fond of the thing it self, abstractly considered. How unspeakably is the *Spirit of Holiness as such*, to be prefer'd ! To have an heart subject to God, willing to be governed by him. To commit to him, even in the dark, our less considerable, Temporal concerns ; and confidently to rely, for our eternal concerns, upon his plain word, in the Gospel, wherein *Life, and Immortality, are brought to light*, would make us little feel the need of Prophecy. The radical principle of *Holiness* is Love  
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(for it is the fulfilling of the Law) in the absence wherof, the Apostle esteems the gift of Prophecy <sup>1 Co. 13:</sup> (with the addition of *understanding all Mysteries, and all Knowledge*) to go for *nothing*.

And if we strictly consider; wherein can we pretend it needful to us to fore-know the Events that are before us? They are either *bad and ungrateful*, or *good and grateful*. For the *former sort*, what would it avail us to fore-know them? That we may avoid them? That is a contradiction. How are they avoidable, when *we know* they will befall us? Is it that we be not surpriz'd by them? We have other means to prevent it. To bear an *equal temper of mind* towards all Conditions. To live always, in this *Region of changes*, expecting *the worst*. At least not to expect  
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rest on Earth, to familiarize to our selves the thoughts of troubles; apprehending, *as to those that are private*, we are always liable.

And for *any greater, common calamities* that we may share in with the *generality* usually, they come on more slowly. There, often, are premonitory tokens, such as were before-mentioned in this discourse, sufficient to keep us from being surpriz'd. And with the rest this may concur (as was said) that perhaps *Some or other* (of that value, and consideration, as to deserve our regard) may, in such a case, have great pre-apprehensions of approaching trouble, which whether they proceed from their greater prudence, and sagacity; or from any more Divine impression upon their minds, we need not determine. If it should be *the*  
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latter, the design may yet be, not to ascertain, but to awaken us. Upon which supposition, a serious consideration of the thing, may well consist with suspending our belief of it. And whether it prove true or false, if we are put thereby, upon the doing of nothing, but what a prudent man, and a good Christian should do, however; and unto which we only needed excitation, a very valuable end is gained. Affaires are generally managed in humane, yea and in the Christian Life, upon no certainty of this or that particular event; 'Tis enough that we are put upon seasonable consideration of what concerns us, in the one kind, or the other, and do accordingly steer our course. When *Jonah* was sent to *Nineve* upon that ungrateful errand. And came a stranger into that luxurious Paganish City

City, though he brought them no *Credentials* from Heaven, nor (that we find) wrought any miracle to confirm his Mission, yet the matter he published in their streets, being *in its self* most considerable, and *they* having (no doubt) sufficient light, to know their practices were such as deserv'd the doom they were threatned with, and needed redresse, they hereupon consider what he said, reform, and are spared. And what harm was now done in all this ? except that *Jonah* had too tender a concern for his own reputation, and lest he should be thought a false Prophet. Whereas the *event that happened* did better prove the impression, upon his mind, *Divine* ; than the destruction of the City, after their Repentance, had done. It being a thing more agreeable to the Di-  
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vine nature, and more worthy of God, to save, than destroy, a penitent People. If we see no such disposition to Repentance, we have the more reason to expect the *overflowing Calamity*; and have enough to prevent our being surpriz'd, without fore-knowing the Event.

But for *Events that are pleasing and grateful*, no matter how *surprizing* they be. The more, the better, the sweeter, and the pleasanter. *When God turn'd again the Captivity of Zion we were as them* Psalm. 126. *that dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* It enhaunceth Mercy, when it is *preventing*, and *unexpected*.

And we may add, concerning *ill events*; it is not only *needless to foreknow them*, but *better to be ignorant*. Think what a case we were in, had we the prospect, lying distinctly, before us, of all the evils that shall befall us through our whole Life. *Such a day I shall have a terrible fit of the Cholick, or the Stone; such a day, my house will be burnt or I shall be undone, and reduc'd to beggary. Such a day my Husband, Wife, or this or that pleasant Child will dye. At such a time, I shall break a bone, or be in prison, &c.* Were this knowledge a felicity? Some may think  
(says

\* *De di-  
vinit.*

(says \* Cicero) it were of great concernment to us to know what shall happen. But (he adds) *Dicæarchus* wrote a great book to shew it is better to be ignorant. He had indeed a copious Argument, and the Book, 'tis like, were a Jewel. But enough is obvious to any mans reason that will soberly consider. Infinite knowledge is only agreeable to infinite Wisdom, and Power. How unsutable were the knowledge, we are apt to covet, to our impotency, and imprudence! As monstrous as the Head of a Giant, joyned to the Body of a Child. The increase of such knowledge would, certainly, but increase our sorrow; and be to us but an Engine of torture, a Medusa's head, always affrighting us with it's own *Idea's*, that would be worse to us, and more tormenting than Snakes and Serpents. Divine Mercie, in these respects, keeps us ignorant. Thereto 'tis fit we should attribute it, not to ill will, as the Devil at first suggested; and as they seem'd to apprehend, against whom *Plutarch* sagely reasons. That it was very improbable, that God, who hath given us birth, nourishment, being and understanding, should intend only to signifie his displeasure towards us, by withholding from us the knowledge of things to come.

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Would we know what concerns our Duty? We have *plain rules* to direct us, it would but tempt, disturb, or divert us many times to know the *Event*. "You need not consult a *Diviner*, (saith a *Epist.* Heathen) whether you are, with hazard, to help your friend, or defend your Countrey. "Nor any thing, by like reason, which we already know we ought to do." No more (saith one commenting upon him) than whether a man should *Eat*, or *Sleep*? Or whether an husbandman should Plant or Sow? *Simpl.*

Or would we fill our minds with *great thoughts*, and employ them about matters more important than *the affairs of the present time*? Besides all the great things that we know to be *past*, Let us look forward to certain *futurities*. We may look even with a certain *expectation* for the day, *when the Heavens shall be rolled up as a Scrowl, and pass away with great noise, and the Elements melt with fervent heat, and the Earth, and all things therein be consumed and burnt up.* We have a certain *foreknowledge* of the final, glorious, appearing and coming of our Lord. We know he will come, and it will be gloriously (*Behold the Son of man coming in the*

*the Heavens with Power and great Glory !)*  
 Such things as these we look for *according to his promise, He will come, and his reward with him. The Trumpet will sound, and the dead arise.* How great a thing is it to have Graves opening all the World over ! And Men and Women springing up, afresh, out of the dust ! And all the chosen ones of our Lord *caught up into the Clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the Air, and so to be for ever with the Lord !*

Let our Thoughts fly over Earth and time, they will be purer, and less tainted. Let them center in God. They will be more steady, compos'd and calm. Fixedly apprehend him to be most *wise, Holy, Good, Powerful, and Ours.* Let our hearts quietly trust in him, *as such.* And be subject to him ; Contented to follow. *He will lead the blind in a way that they know not ;* And, if we betake our selves wholly to him, *will be our God for ever and ever. Our God, and our Guide even to the Death.*

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